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PRUDENTIUS, POETRY AND HISPANIA

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**Submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

The work presented in this thesis is my own

.....

Paula Hershkowitz

ABSTRACT

The thesis focuses on the martyr poetry of Prudentius. It argues that we cannot fully understand his verses without contextualising the poet within his physical environment, in particular that of Hispania, his homeland. Although literary sources can provide information about Prudentius and his work, it is only by accessing evidence from the archaeological and visual record when studying his poetry that its purpose can be fully understood. Chapter I serves as an introduction to Prudentius. It examines the information he gives us about himself in his poetry and discusses the historical context and background of his work. Chapter II identifies the audience of Prudentius and proposes a role for him as villa-poet to the elite of Hispania. It questions the extent to which this audience were, during his lifetime, committed to the Christian religion. Chapter III analyses the martyr poems in detail, especially those located in Hispania. By examining the material evidence for martyr worship in the locations mentioned by Prudentius it assesses whether the cult of the martyrs played a significant role in the lives of the Spanish. Chapter IV examines two poems set in Italian martyr tombs which show the emotional involvement of the poet in martyr worship and highlights the influence which Christian iconography could have on a susceptible viewer such as Prudentius. Chapter V argues from extant material evidence that the fourth and early fifth-century visual backdrop of Hispania remained substantially non-Christian. It proposes that in order to envisage the Christian art presented by Prudentius' Italian poems his audience would need to mentally access these local 'pagan' images. In conclusion, the physical and literary evidence from Hispania indicates that Prudentius' audience at home was largely lacking in commitment to Christianity and confirms the significance and necessity of his poetry as a vehicle for proselytism.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AEspA</i>	<i>Archivo Español de Arqueología</i>
<i>Apoth.</i>	<i>Apotheosis, Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina</i> , CCSL 126 (ed.), M. Cunningham (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966).
<i>BAR</i>	<i>British Archaeological Reports</i>
<i>Cath.</i>	<i>Cathemerinon, Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina</i> , CCSL 126 (ed.), M. Cunningham (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966).
<i>CC</i>	D. Fernández Galiano, <i>Mosaicos romanos del Convento Cesaraugustano</i> (Mallorca: Caja de Ahorra de Zaragoza, Aragón y Rioja, 1987).
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>CME</i>	<i>Corpus de Mosaicos de España</i>
<i>CS.</i>	<i>Contra Symmachum, Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina</i> , CCSL 126 (ed.), M. Cunningham (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966).
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
<i>CSIC</i>	<i>Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas</i>
<i>CSIR</i>	<i>Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani</i>
<i>C.Th.</i>	T. Mommsen and P.M. Meyer, <i>Theodosiani libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis: et leges novella ad Theodosianum pertinentes</i> , 2 vols. (Berlin, 1905).
<i>EME</i>	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i>
<i>F-Galiano</i>	D. Fernández Galiano, <i>Carranque: centro de Hispania romana</i> (Madrid: Museo Arqueológico Regional, 2001).

- Ham.* (H)amartigenia, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*, CCSL 126 (ed.), M. Cunningham (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966).
- ICERV* *Inscripciones cristianas de la España romana y visigoda* (ed.), J.Vives (Barcelona: A.G. Ponsa, 1969).
- ICUR* *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores. Nova series* (Vatican City: Pont. Institutum Archaeologiae Christianae, 1922-1992).
- La* J. Lancha, *Mosaïque et culture dans l'occident romain (Ier-IVe.s)* (Rome: "l'Erma" di Bretschneider, 1997).
- LRE* A.H.M.Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1964).
- JRA* *Journal of Roman Studies*
- JRS* *Journal of Roman Archaeology*
- Mezquíriz* M. Mezquíriz Irujo, *La villa romana de Arellano* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra: Institución Príncipe de Viana, 2008).
- MGH* *Monumenta Germaniae Historiae*
- MRE* J-M. Blázquez, *Mosaicos romanos de España* (Madrid: Ediciones Catedra, 1993).
- Pe.* *Peristephanon, Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*, CCSL 126 (ed.), M. Cunningham (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966).
- PL* *Patrologia Latina* (ed.), J.P. Migne.
- PLRE I* *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, I, AD 260-395* (eds.), A.H.M. Jones, J.Morris and J.Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).
- PLRE II* *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, II, AD 395-527* (ed.), J.Martindale (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

- Praef.* *Praefatio, Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*, CCSL 126 (ed.), M. Cunningham (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966).
- Ps.* *Psychomachia, Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*, CCSL 126 (ed.), M. Cunningham (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966).
- SC* *Sources Chrétiennes*
- Tituli Hist.* *Tituli Historiarum or Dittochaeon, Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*, CCSL 126 (ed.), M. Cunningham (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING PRUDENTIUS

I. Primary Source Material and Secondary Scholarship

During the last years of the fourth century AD or in the early years of the fifth, a Christian poet Aurelius Prudentius Clemens made journeys to two martyr shrines in Italy. At both of these shrines, dedicated to the martyrs Cassian and Hippolytus, were paintings which portrayed the deaths of the saints. The proximity of their remains and the scenes of suffering and death so overwhelmed and inspired Prudentius, emotionally and physically, that he set down his experiences in poems honouring the martyrs.¹ An integral part of the poems were vivid ekphraseis of the images depicted at their shrines, by which means Prudentius intended to convey to his audience the powerful reaction he had felt in the presence of the saints.² These two pieces would eventually form part of the *Peristephanon*, a group of fourteen poems written by Prudentius in order to glorify and remember Christian martyrs. Prudentius' identity as a Christian Hispano-Roman is demonstrated in the choice of saints he commemorated in the *Peristephanon*: five were from Rome and Italy, emphasising the centre of the Roman Christian Empire in the West, and, more importantly for the argument of this thesis, six were from his homeland, Spain.

One of the primary aims of this dissertation is to explore the historical context of Prudentius' *Peristephanon*, placing emphasis on the poet's roots and environment in Late Antique Hispania and on his mission to strengthen the Christian commitment of the Hispano-Gallic peoples, who formed his earliest audience. I examine the transmission of ideas and influences which informed Prudentius' writing, as well as the influence of Hispania itself, including the emergence of the cult of the saints and

¹ *Peristephanon* (henceforth *Pe.*) IX and XI: Prudentius, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina* (ed.), M. Cunningham, (CCSL 126: 326-9, 370-8).

² Although in modern times ekphrasis is considered to be a description of a work of art, it was defined by the *Progymnasmata*, the books of rhetorical instruction, as aiming 'to place a subject before the eyes'. R. Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 17-19.

the acceptance of imagery as an instrument for Christian propagation. I also examine Prudentius' fears concerning heresy and the recrudescence of pagan worship.³

The material record of late fourth- and early fifth-century Hispania, as we shall see, indicates a wealthy and cultivated elite living there, but there are few signs that they were securely Christian in their beliefs. This is demonstrated by the dearth of physical evidence for churches in both rural and urban areas, and by textual evidence from the period which shows concerns among churchmen about continuing pagan worship in Hispania.⁴ Based on such evidence there is no certainty that Prudentius' potential audience were practising Christians. In the light of this, why Prudentius felt such a need to propagate his faith through his verses becomes apparent.

Earlier studies on Prudentius do not, in general, focus upon the poet's Spanish background and identity. These studies have often been classicists' readings of his work, where emphasis has been placed by scholars on the form, language and construction of his poetry, and on his debt to Latin classical authors.⁵ I depart from these traditional approaches by combining archaeological and art historical evidence with written sources. My research thus sets the poet in a broader context that acknowledges the importance of material culture, as well as literary culture and socio-cultural networks. This interdisciplinary methodology has not been applied in depth before to Prudentius and his writing nor as an approach to contemporaneous

³ I use "pagan" to describe non-Christian worship, as this was the word employed by Prudentius himself. *Cathemerinon* (henceforth *Cath.*) XI (CCSL 126: 63, line 87): "pagana gens"; *Contra Symmachum* (henceforth *CS.*) I, *praefatio* (CCSL 126:182, line 6): "gens pagana".

⁴ See Chapter 2, 67-75 regarding the existence of churches during Prudentius' lifetime; Pacianus of Barcelona (who died c.380AD) in his *De Paenitentibus* I.3 (CCSL 69B:10) complained of the continuing celebration of a pagan festival called the Fawn (Cervulus); in 385AD Himerius of Tarragona was advised by Pope Siricius regarding apostates who had returned to idolatry, *Siricius, Epistolae et Decreta, Ep.I* (*Siricius papa ad Himerium episcopum Tarraconensem*), III.4 (PL13: 1136).

⁵ Works emphasising these aspects of Prudentius' poetry include; A-M.Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); M.Malamud, *A Poetics of Transformation: Prudentius and Classical Mythology*, (Ithaca,N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1989); M.Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: the Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press,1993); L.Rivera García, *La Poésia de Prudencio* (Caceres:Universidad de Huelva Publicaciones, 1996); R.Atanassova, *Doctrine, Polemic and Literary tradition in some Hexameter Poems of Prudentius*, (Unpublished PhD, Oxford, 2001); M.Luhken, *Christianorum Maro et Flaccus: zur Vergil-und Horazrezeption des Prudentius (Hypomnemata)* (Göttingen:Vanderhoek and Ruprecht, 2002); C.Witke, 'Recycled Words: Vergil, Prudentius and Saint Hippolytus,' in R.Rees (ed.), *Romane Memento: Vergil in the Fourth Century* (London:Duckworth, 2004), 128-140; M.Mastrangelo, *The Roman Self in Late Antiquity: Prudentius and the Poetics of the Soul* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); M.Malamud, *Hamartigenia: The Origin of Sin* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press,2011); A.Dykes, *Reading Sin in the World:the Hamartigenia of Prudentius and the Vocation of the Responsible Reader* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 2011).

writers.⁶ Any material evidence that has been viewed as relevant to the poet's work has focused on his itinerant presence in Italy, rather than in his native Hispania.⁷ I suggest that examining the material culture and visual record of fourth and fifth-century Hispania itself contributes to a more complete picture of the physical, cultural and religious landscape in which Prudentius lived, and thus increases our understanding of the opinions and attitudes expressed by him in his poetry.

Although I do not approach this topic as a classicist, I acknowledge the essential importance of the classical heritage to Prudentius in creating a body of inspirational and didactic verse which could also give pleasure to a cultured and educated audience. Moreover, I also reference the relatively neglected Christian writers of fourth-century Hispania who furnished an indigenous literary culture for the edification and enlightenment of Prudentius and this circle. It is fundamental to acknowledge Prudentius' attachment to his "felix...terra Hibera," and the importance to him that this should be a Christian Hispania.⁸

It has been around twenty years since substantial studies on Prudentius' martyr poems were produced.⁹ Anne-Marie Palmer's book was the first major monograph, and still the most comprehensive, on the *Peristephanon*. Earlier Prudentian scholarship had concentrated on the *Psychomachia*, his allegorical epic of vice and virtue, the most popular of Prudentius' works in the Middle Ages.¹⁰ At the heart of Palmer's work lies a discourse on Prudentius' debt to classical authors such as Vergil, Horace and Ovid and the significance of his incorporation and imitation of

⁶ L.Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). In this recent work Nasrallah brings together literary texts and archaeological remains to understand how early Christians engaged with image and architecture. However she focuses on five Christian second-century texts, rather than on a single specific author. Also these texts are in Greek and Nasrallah's physical evidence is centred on Rome and the eastern part of the Empire, Nasrallah, *Christian Responses*, 1-12.

⁷ For example, R.Pillinger, *Die Tituli Historiarum oder das sogenannte Dittochaeon des Prudentius* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1980); L.Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity* (London: Duckworth, 2004) in particular ch.6; L.Gosserez, 'Les images divines de Prudence et l'art paléochrétien', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé*, 4 (1998), 337-353.

⁸ *Pe.I* (CCSL 126: 251, line 4.).

⁹ Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs*; Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs*; Malamud, in *A Poetics of Transformation* examined both the *Peristephanon* and the *Psychomachia* in her book which traced models in classical literature and mythology which Prudentius used in both of these works. She emphasised in particular the relationship between the saint Hippolytus and the story of the doomed Greek youth Hippolytus.

¹⁰ For example, M.Smith, *Prudentius' Psychomachia: A Reexamination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); S. Nugent, *Allegory and Poetics: The Structure and Imagery of Prudentius' Psychomachia* (Frankfurt; New York: P.Lang, 1985).

their words in his poems.¹¹ Palmer's work, however, also provides a valuable analysis of the various sources, such as earlier martyr *Acta*, for the stories of the saints in the *Peristephanon*. Palmer also highlights the contribution that these poems can make to our knowledge of martyr cults in the poet's period.¹²

Michael Roberts' book similarly emphasised Prudentius' importance in advertising the cult of the saints; Roberts also signalled his intention to set the poems in the context of Late Antique culture and spirituality, particularly with reference to the sanctity of a martyr's shrine.¹³ He acknowledged, as I must, the debt to the inspirational work of Peter Brown on the growth of the martyr cult phenomenon during the fourth century.¹⁴ However the Late Antique culture which Roberts aimed to contextualise was represented for him predominantly by classical texts. Although he touched on the visual culture in Italy that lay behind the Cassian and Hippolytus poems, he did not make any connection with the visual culture which existed in the poet's own native land. The most recent full-scale Anglophone study on Prudentius by Marc Mastrangelo returned exclusively to the poet's literary constructs, usefully proposing that Prudentius synthesised Roman pagan history with biblical narratives, in an intertextual dialogue, to present a Christian salvation history with the martyrs as new epic heroes. Mastrangelo's Prudentius thus continues to be defined by his 'Roman' identity – he is a *vir Romanus*, albeit a Christian one.¹⁵

Prudentius is today known as one of the earliest and finest of the Christian poets. He has attracted scholarly attention in Spain, his homeland: most Anglophone

¹¹ Palmer, *Prudentius*, ch.4-6; Prudentius' debt to these authors is a recurring theme among classicists, from the eighteenth-century Richard Bentley's '*Christianorum Maro et Flaccus*' to, more recently, C. Witke, 'Recycled Words'. See also n.5 above.

¹² Palmer, *Prudentius*, chs.7,8.; P.Castillo Maldonado, '*Angelorum Participes*; The Cult of the Saints in Late Antique Spain' in K.Bowes and M. Kulikowski (eds.) *Hispania in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives* (Leiden; Boston:Brill,2005), 151-188, on Prudentius as a source for the martyr cults, pages 179-185 in particular; See Chapter Three below for a discussion of Prudentius as a reliable source for these cults.

¹³ Roberts, *Poetry*, 1-5. Roberts places a strong emphasis on Prudentius' choice of complex language, noting the effectiveness of his use of polysemy used to express the "indeterminacies of time and place" which occurred at the sacred spaces at the shrines, 194-6.

¹⁴ Roberts, *Poetry*, 7; P.Brown, *The Cult of the Saints; Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 3. Brown's oft-quoted proposition that "the graves of the saints were privileged places where Heaven and Earth met" is exemplified by Prudentius' reference to the tombs of Emeterius and Chelidonius. "Hic locus dignus tenendis ossibus visus deo" - "This place has seemed to God worthy to keep their bones", *Pe.I* (CCSL 126:251, line 5).

¹⁵ Mastrangelo, *The Roman Self*, 1-7. This book also discusses the *Psychomachia*. Prudentius' use of intertextuality to create a fresh form in the *Cathemerinon* and *Apotheosis* poems is also recently examined in C.Heinz, *Mehrfache Intertextualität bei Prudentius* (Frankfurt;Oxford:P.Lang, 2007).

studies, however, like those of Palmer, Roberts and Mastrangelo, overlook the relevant Spanish primary and secondary sources. By contrast, I have utilised Spanish language resources in my studies, in particular evidence from archaeological and art historical researches.¹⁶ Until recently access to current Spanish Late Antique scholarship has proved difficult for anyone unfamiliar with Iberian languages.¹⁷ Bowes' and Kulikowski's volume '*Hispania in Late Antiquity*', however, has done much to remedy this situation.¹⁸ It presents an up-to-date synthesis of developments in the history and archaeology of the period in a series of essays in English, accessing Spanish scholarship, many by Spanish writers. These essays explore topics ranging from cities and villas to religion and the economy. In the introduction to this book the editors point out that until over twenty years ago, Spanish historiography centred on issues of Spanish Catholicism and nationality. It focused on the Visigoths as a way of confirming a Spanish Catholic identity. The study of Roman history between early Imperial Hispania and the invasions of 409 by Sueves, Alans and Vandals was neglected and seen as a period of decline. Archaeological sites were often dug with reference to historical dates, and destruction layers frequently attributed to textually-attested third-century invasions and the so-called 'third-century crisis' or to fifth-century invasions. Emphasis tended to be placed on art and architecture. This has now changed and the quality of excavations and publication standards has substantially increased.¹⁹ Nevertheless, in spite of these developments, the methodological approach which I have developed in this dissertation has not yet

¹⁶ For example, research centred around Prudentius' home town of Calagurris; U.Espinosa Ruiz, *Calagurris Iulia* (Logroño: Ayuntamiento de Calahorra, 1984); *Calahorra: bimilenario de su fundación; actas del I Symposium de Historia de Calahorra* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1984).

¹⁷ Access even to Spanish speakers outside of Spain can still be problematic as many publications are regional, with the national *Archivo Español de Arqueología* (AEspA) proving the exception, although in Portugal the situation is more centralised, S.Keay, 'Recent Archaeological Work in Roman Iberia, (1990-2002)', *JRS*, 43 (2003), 146-211. This article contains useful comparatively recent sources for Iberian archaeological research; there are now Spanish journals available online, such as *Kalakorikos*, a local journal focusing on the history and archaeology of Calahorra.

¹⁸ K.Bowes and M.Kulikowski (eds.), *Hispania in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005).

¹⁹ For instance, S. Maloney, J.Hale, 'The villa of Torre de Palma (Alto Alentejo)', *JRA*, 9 (1996), 275-94. 1950's and 60's archaeology had focused on this villa's mosaics. Reexcavation post-1987 informed on construction techniques and rural economic functions previously unexplored, and utilised modern dating methods; In contrast, modern public works brought to light the new site of the villa El Ruedo, (1989-90). Although the fourth-century structure contained an important statuary collection, the holistic view of the complexity of this settlement is seen as a paradigm for this kind of rural complex. D.Vaquerizo Gil, J.Carrillo Diaz-Pines, 'The Roman villa of El Ruedo (Almedinilla, Córdoba) *JRA*, 8 (1995), 121-151; D.Vaquerizo Gil, 'La villa romana de El Ruedo (Almedinilla, Córdoba), paradigma de asentamiento rural en Baetica', in C.Fernández Ochoa, V.García-Entero, F.Gil Sendino (eds.), *Las villae en el occidente del Imperio: arquitectura y función. IV Coloquio Internacional de Arqueología en Gijón* (Gijón: Trea, 2008), 261-283.

been incorporated into other studies of Prudentius – an approach which I consider essential in order to understand the poet and his works. A true picture of the poet cannot be painted without accessing the material evidence from fourth and fifth century Hispania which provides the background to his life.

II. Prudentius on himself.

Prudentius' rural residence was most likely located near to the town of Calagurris, which lies beside the river Ebro in Northern Spain.²⁰ Here in the bountiful Spanish countryside he claimed to lead an ordered existence, bound by Christian observance.²¹ Although travels as an Imperial bureaucrat and as a pilgrim may have taken him away from his home periodically, he seems to have been settled there permanently later in life. We cannot know, however, if Prudentius' settled existence was challenged by the invasions of Hispania by the forces of the usurper Constantine and those of the Vandals, Sueves and Alans, c.408- 409AD.²² The poet wrote a preface to his collected works which can be dated to 405AD. There is no indication that Prudentius survived long after that time, since it is likely that he could not have avoided some reference to these invasions in any subsequent poems, or perhaps even to the sack of Rome in 410AD.²³ His only specific mention of the troubles which dogged the Empire during his lifetime is a eulogistic report of the Roman victory over the Goths at Pollentia in 402AD.²⁴ In fact, it is noticeable that throughout his work there is little awareness of the political and hostile events which were taking place around him.²⁵ As I shall argue, the focus and purpose of Prudentius' poems were always to praise the Christian God and to spread His message to an audience centred in the poet's Spanish homeland, and probably in adjacent Southern Gaul.

²⁰ See page 19 below.

²¹ *Cath. III* (CCSL 126: 12-13, 41-80), in particular describes the gathering of crops and fruits of the field. The *Cathemerinon* poems were composed to be read diurnally and seasonally.

²² Orosius, *Historiarum Adversum Paganos, Libri VII*. 40-1, (CSEL 5:549-555); *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana: Two contemporary accounts of the final years of the Roman Empire* (ed. and tr.) R.Burgess (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 82-3, at 409-411, 15-17. These, albeit partial, Christian writers describe these events. Hydatius writes about "the barbarians who had entered Spain and pillaged it". Orosius describes the defence of Spain by Didymus and Verinianus on behalf of Emperor Honorius and the devastation of property and people subsequent to the invasion.

²³ J-L. Charlet, 'Aesthetic Trends in Late Latin Poetry (325-410)', *Philologus*, 132:1 (1988), 74-85, 74; Palmer. *Prudentius*, 31.

²⁴ *CS.II* (CCSL 126: 235-6, lines 696 – 720.)

²⁵ *Prudence* (ed. and tr.) M. Lavarenne, Collection Budé, 4 vols. (Paris: "Les Belles Lettres", 1990), Vol. 3, 90, notes "l'habitude de notre poète d'éviter l'actualité dans le choix de ses sujets".

Prudentius' proselytizing sentiments are most clearly and succinctly set out in the *Praefatio*, which also contains the most conspicuous, if sparse, autobiographical information that the poet has chosen to give to us.²⁶ Often the overture to any study of Prudentius has been through allusion to the contents of the *Praefatio*, as a means of trying to contextualise him.²⁷ Before considering the content of this poem, however, I prefer to question this tradition and begin by looking at the *Epilogus*: the piece which normally concludes his collection of poems.²⁸ The *Epilogus* hints subtly at Prudentius' view of his world and begins with these verses:

To God the Father he who is devout, faithful, guiltless and pure,
offers the gifts of his conscience which the blessed soul within him
has in plenty; another again cuts his wealth short to give a living to
the needy. For my part I dedicate my swift iambics and quick-
running trochees, for I lack holiness and am not rich enough to
relieve the poor.²⁹

With these words Prudentius confesses that he is unable to serve God as a saint-like figure or a moneyed lay-person. He is insufficiently self-denying to join the church as a priest or monk, like contemporaries such as Jerome or Martin of Tours, or to adopt the life promoted by them of worldly renunciation and ascetic seclusion. On holy days Prudentius fasted to purify and strengthen a mind and body polluted by overindulgence.³⁰ After the fast, however, he returned to the abundant fruits of the field provided by God for man's enjoyment.³¹ He does not seem to have subscribed to

²⁶ *Praefatio* (henceforth *Praef.*) (CCSL 126: 2, lines 36-42).

²⁷ Palmer, *Prudentius*; I.Lana, *Due Capitoli Prudenziiani: La Biografia, la cronologia delle opere, la poetica* (Rome: Editrice Studium, 1962); Lavarenne, *Prudence*; Malamud, *A Poetics of Transformation*.

²⁸ Of the more-or-less complete extant manuscripts, the *Epilogus* is the final poem in the collection in the MSS families Ae, Ab and Ba, except where these are partial, as in copies in Paris (Codex Parisinus Latinus 8084) and the Ambrosian Library. In the family Bb it follows verses from the *Cathemerinon* or the *Peristephanon*. Discussion of the form of the editions of the collection are given by the following; Cunningham (CCSL 126); Lavarenne, *Prudence*; J.Bergman, *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina* (CSEL 61).

²⁹ *Epilogus* (henceforth *Epil.*) (CCSL 126:401, lines 1-10): "Inmolat patri deo pius, fidelis, innocens, pudicus dona conscientiae, quibus beata mens abundat intus. Alter et pecuniam recidit, unde viciunt egeni. nos citos iambicos sacramus et rotatiles trochaeos sanctitatis indigi nec ad levamen pauperum potentes". *Prudentius* (ed. and tr.) H. Thomson, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1949), 373.

³⁰ *Cath. VII* (CCSL 126:42, lines 6-19), e.g. excesses of "vini atque somni".

³¹ *Cath. VIII*, 'The Hymn after Fasting', celebrates the pleasure of eating (CCSL 126:44, lines 15-16); in *Cath. III* (CCSL 126:12-13, lines 36-85) God is praised for providing food for man's enjoyment,

the diet of herbs and bread and a little fish advocated by Jerome.³² This pleasure in food seems to point to a more worldly existence at Prudentius' Spanish villa than the ascetic community life proposed for him by some scholars.³³

As Kim Bowes has pointed out, in her recent exploration of Christian domestic worship in Late Antiquity, however, a growing number of elites *were* pursuing villa-based ascetic regimes.³⁴ In Spain Jerome's correspondents, Lucinius and his wife Theodora, lived on their estate in chaste piety.³⁵ Meanwhile Priscillian attracted a group around him who followed the ascetic demands of his teaching.³⁶ These followers were drawn from noble families including bishops and also commoners, probably those attached to the estates of their *domini*.³⁷ Sulpicius Severus set up an ascetic project at Primuliacum, near Narbonne, and similarly, Paulinus gathered a like-minded ascetic community together near the martyrion he built for St. Felix at Nola.³⁸ Although the details of Prudentius' religious lifestyle are unclear, it seems he probably participated in the structured rituals of worship he set out in the *Liber Cathemerinon*: his prayers written to be said or sung at specific times of the day or year.³⁹ These villa-based devotions did not seem to require clergy, although it is apparent from the late fourth-century Council of Toledo that estates could maintain their own clergy.⁴⁰ In Prudentius' case, even if his daily religious life revolved

"fruenta patent homini", 84. Prudentius' apparent distaste for animal meat could be related to the animal carnage he described in pagan sacrifices. See *CS.I* (CCSL 126:201, lines 451-4) for example.

³² Jerome, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, as recommended in his letter to Laeta, *Ep.* 107.10 (CCSL 55: 301, line 3).

³³ K.Bowes, '“Une coterie espagnole pieuse”: Christian Archaeology and Christian Communities in Fourth- and Fifth-Century Hispania', in Bowes and Kulikowski, *Hispania*, 189-258, at 254, Bowes references Charlet and Evenpoel.

³⁴ K.Bowes, *Private Worship, Public values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) on estate asceticism, 152-7.

³⁵ Jerome, *Epistulae*, 75.2 (CSEL55:31, lines 13-15) to Theodora praising her chaste marriage to Lucinius.

³⁶ H.Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 70-73 on the teachings of Priscillian.

³⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Sulpicii Severi: Libri Qui Supersunt, Chroniconum*, II, 46 (CSEL I: 99 -100, lines 5-7); Bowes, *Private Worship*, 182-3.

³⁸ Paulinus of Nola, *Sancti Pontii Meropii Paulini Nolani, Epistulae* (CSEL 29). Their lifestyles were shown in Paulinus' letters, for example, *Ep.* I.I (CSEL29:2.lines 6-10); *Ep.* 5,6 (CSEL 29:28, 11-23) (Severus); *Ep.* 19.4 (CSEL 29: 141-2); *Ep.* 23.6-8 (CSEL 29:162); *Ep.* 24.9 (CSEL 29:208-10) (Paulinus).

³⁹ The *Cathemerinon* poems set out daily prayers for; (i) cock-crow, (ii) morning, (iii) and (iv) before and after eating, (v) lamp-lighting, and (vi) before sleeping. There are also prayers for; (vii) before and after fasting, (ix) all hours, (x) the burial of the dead and (xi) and (xii) Christmas and Epiphany.

⁴⁰ *Concilios visigóticos e hispano-romanos* (ed.and tr.Sp.), J.Vives (Barcelona: CSIC, Instituto Enrique Flóres, 1963), Concilio de Toledo I, 397-400 AD, 19-33. Canon V refers to clergy attached to a "place where there is a church, either in castelli or a vicus or villas" - "in loco in quo est ecclesia aut castelli aut vicus aut villae", 21.

around his own household, it would seem that he belonged to a larger Christian community, led by Valerianus, probably his bishop in Calagurris. This was the ‘*venerande sacerdos*’ to whom he addressed his poem on Hippolytus, recommending that the martyr’s feast day be included in this Hispanic community’s yearly festivals.⁴¹

Although, therefore, Prudentius appears to have been part of some kind of Christian community, his words imply that he was insufficiently affluent to make substantial donations to the church and its dependants, in spite of elsewhere recommending that others should be giving lavishly to the poor.⁴² Euergetic urges, such as supporting the construction and maintenance of public baths and other buildings, or the erection of statues honouring local worthies, had operated as a prestige currency for the Hispano-Romans of earlier times. To what extent these euergetic urges were replaced by support for the late Roman church in Hispania, in particular, is unclear. It is apparent that in the fourth century the Hispanic aristocracy had invested in lavish personal building programmes, but less obvious that a similar investment had been made in Christian edifices.⁴³ Prudentius himself, however, provides the evidence that offerings could be in the form of practical help for the *egeni* and the *indigi*, if not in more permanent structures.⁴⁴ This charitableness is confirmed by the activities of the ascetic couple, Lucinius and Theodora, who not only dispersed wealth to the Spanish poor, but also sent donations to Jerusalem and Alexandria.⁴⁵ The extent of the Christian commitment of most Hispano-Romans remains ill-defined, but the *Epilogus* reminds us that Prudentius’ audience were expected to catch references to Biblical texts, containing as it does a passage closely

⁴¹ *Pe.XI* (CCSL 126: 376, line 179; 377, lines 233-6). The bishop-led community was most likely at Calagurris, Prudentius’ home town (see below at 19), since a baptistery was located there according to Prudentius. *Pe.VIII* is entitled “in loco in quo martyres passi sunt nunc baptisterium est Calagurri”. A bishop called Valerianus of Calagurris appears in a later addition to Jerome’s *de viris illustribus* according to J.Madoz, ‘Valeriano, obispo Calagurritano, escritor del siglo v’, in *Historia Sacra*, 3 (1950), 131-7; Zaragoza has also been suggested as his see as a ‘Valerius’ was at the Church council there in 380 AD. See, for discussion, M.Cunningham, ‘The Nature and Purpose of the Peristephanon of Prudentius’, *Sacris Erudiri*, 14 (1963), 40-5.

⁴² *Cath.VII* (CCSL 126: 42, lines 216-220), following the words of Matthew, 19.21 - if you wish to be perfect, sell everything you possess and give to the poor.

⁴³ Bowes, ‘“Une coterie Espagnole pieuse”’, 207-8.

⁴⁴ *Epil.* (CCSL 126:401, lines 6, 9).

⁴⁵ Jerome, *Epistulae*, 75, 4 (CSEL 55: 33, lines 5-10) to Theodora; *Ep.* 71, 4 (CSEL 55:5, lines 2-4) to Lucinius, praising their generosity.

based on a verse from the second book of Timothy, concerning the contents of the rich man's house.⁴⁶

Prudentius picks up on this motif as he continues the *Epilogus*. In the house of the Father he can be nothing but the poor worn-out vessel.⁴⁷ He is not overly pious or wealthy, but, however, he is still able to offer poetry as a salvatory contribution to God.⁴⁸ Westra sees this assertion as one of the 'classical modesty topoi' disguising a sense of pride in his self-worth.⁴⁹ Like Hippolyte Delahaye, however, I see Prudentius as sincere and honest in his assessment of the situation.⁵⁰ He was, after all, at least in his mid-fifties, a good age for his times (assuming the *Epilogus* was written at a similar time to the *Praefatio*).⁵¹ His public achievements were behind him, and he was possibly no great land-owning aristocrat.⁵² Prudentius seems to have wished to live a life of temperance as can be seen from Malamud's recent translation of the poet's own words from the *Hamartigenia*: "the man who is able to find the golden mean is happy – the man who can with moderation enjoy the gifts he has been given, and use them sparingly".⁵³ He maybe was retired to a modest rural establishment, with only death remaining to him as a certain prospect.⁵⁴ It is not unreasonable, then, to see true humility in Prudentius' offering of the talents which he hoped would find him a place for eternity in the company of Christ and the saints.

The *Epilogus* sets our scene in a more nuanced fashion, but the *Praefatio* presents a more obvious route to locating Prudentius in the environment of Late Antique Hispania - the former being a kind of negative to the latter's positive. Prudentius

⁴⁶ *Epil.* (CCSL 126:401-2, lines 13-24), "In a rich man's house there are many furnishings set in every corner; there is the shining cup, and the basin of bronze finely wrought is there, and the earthenware pot, and the heavy, broad tray of silver; there pieces made of ivory, and some hollowed out of oak and elm" (tr.) Thomson, 373. Cf. Timothy II, 2.20. "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth".

⁴⁷ *Epil.* (CCSL 126:402, line 26): "obsoletum vasculum".

⁴⁸ *Epil.* (CCSL 126: 402, lines 30-32).

⁴⁹ H. Westra, 'Augustine and Poetic Exegesis' in H. Meynell (ed.) *Grace, Politics and Desire: Essays on Augustine* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990), 87-100.

⁵⁰ H. Delahaye, *The Legends of the Saints* (tr.) D. Attwater, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1962), 92.

⁵¹ *Praef.* (CCSL 126: 1, lines 1-3). This was written when he was 56.

⁵² Prudentius' status is discussed at 21-22 and 27-9 below. Even if he had reached a senatorial rank, this was not necessarily an indication of affluence. The Spanish senator Tuentius came under the scrutiny of the *quaesitores glebae senatoriae* when unable to fulfil his senatorial obligations due to poverty. PLRE. II, 1130; Symmachus, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi quae Supersunt*, (MGH 6,1: 119, 4.61.2).

⁵³ Malamud, *The Origin of Sin*, 20 (lines 431-4 in Malamud's translation); *Ham.* (CCSL 126: 126, lines 330-1).

⁵⁴ *Pe. II* (CCSL 126: 277, line 574.) Prudentius describes himself as a "poetam rusticum"; A. Chavarría Arnau, *El Final de las Villae en Hispania, (siglos IV-VII)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007). Note that this catalogue of Spanish villas includes a large number of smaller villas in late Roman Spain.

eschews the kind of conventional self-congratulatory display of roots and family that we find in the Gallo-Roman aristocrat Ausonius.⁵⁵ Prudentius commences simply by telling us that he was writing in his fifty-seventh year, having been born in 348AD during the consulship of Salia.⁵⁶ The *Praefatio* does not in fact name his birthplace, but references in the poems of the *Peristephanon* reveal that Prudentius places himself in the north-east of Spain at the time of writing them. Calagurris (Calahorra) and Caesaraugusta (Zaragoza) are the strongest candidates for his home.⁵⁷ Calagurris seems most likely, since Prudentius conspicuously opens the *Peristephanon* with a hymn to Emeterius and Chelidonius of Calagurris and refers to the town as “*nostro oppido*”.⁵⁸ Again, in *Peristephanon* IV, when detailing those towns which claim martyrs, he gives Calagurris the possessive “*nostra*”.⁵⁹ Although “*noster*” is used in the poem on the martyrs of Caesaraugusta it seems to refer rather to ‘our’ people or ‘our’ land, i.e. Hispania or Tarraconensis.⁶⁰

The *Praefatio* proceeds with a brief account of the poet’s early life. His education followed the traditional course of a member of the higher social classes, first attending the schools of grammar, which for him were chiefly memorable for the physical abuse he suffered at the hands of his teachers.⁶¹ Albeit a *topos* this was probably a cause of genuine distress. The renowned first-century Spanish teacher of rhetoric, Quintilian, reported that although he personally disapproved of it, flogging was a regular custom among his fellows.⁶² Prudentius then trained in a school of

⁵⁵ Ausonius, *Decimi Magni Ausonii Opera*, (ed.) R.Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1999), 3,*Praefationes Variae* 1, lines 1-14 including 5-7, “Vasates patria est patri, gens Haedua matri de patre,Tarbellis sed genetrix ab Aquis, ipse ego Burdigalae genitus”. Prudentius may have been familiar with the works of Ausonius as proposed in J-L. Charlet, *L’Influence d’Ausone sur la Poésie de Prudence* (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence;Paris: diffusion H. Champion,1980).

⁵⁶ *Praef.* (CCSL 126:1, lines 1-3, 24), thus dating this poem to around 405AD.

⁵⁷ Tarraco has been suggested on the basis of “nostrae....urbis” in *Pe.VI* (CCSL 126:319,line 143) as by Lana in *Due capitoli*, 3, but the town is north of the river Ebro and Prudentius specifically situates himself south of the Ebro (“nos Vasco Hiberus dividit”) in his relation to the location of Rome. *Pe.II* (CCSL 126: 275, line 537).

⁵⁸ *Pe.I* (CCSL 126:255,line 116).

⁵⁹ *Pe. IV* (CCSL 126:287,line 31.) This has been concluded, amongst others, by; Lana, *Due capitoli* ,10; Palmer, *Prudentius*, 21; Espinosa, *Calagurris*, 233-238.

⁶⁰ *Pe.IV* (CCSL 126: line 286,1;290,line 114), “noster populus” and “terris....nostris”. Also Calagurris and not Caesaraugusta is located in the lands of the Vascones, where Prudentius has placed himself in *Pe. II* (CCSL 126: 275, line 537); Espinosa, *Calagurris*, 236; It is significant that of the six poems on Hispanic saints two celebrate saints from Calagurris (I&VIII), and two celebrate saints from Zaragoza (IV&V). A fifth praises Fructuosus of Tarraco, the provincial capital of Tarraconensis (VI).

⁶¹ *Praef.* (CCSL 126:1, lines 7-8).

⁶² Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* (ed.) M.Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) BK.1,3 (21,lines 14-18); Lavarenne, *Prudence*, vi, refers to Horace’s remembrance the beatings of *Orbilius Plagosus* (Ep.2.1.70); Augustine also suffered at the hands of his teachers, *Confessionum Libri XIII*,

rhetoric, subsequently using the skills acquired there to pursue a career as an advocate. Where his training took place can only be conjectured, but it would not have been necessary to leave or travel far from north-eastern Spain, as we know of fourth-century centres of education in Zaragoza and Bordeaux.⁶³ Although apparently successful, like Augustine, he regretted learning the tricks of oratory, which enabled him to deceive and lie convincingly.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, Prudentius' rhetorical training would serve him in good stead in the cause of Christian proselytism.⁶⁵

Like Augustine, Prudentius also expresses regret that during these youthful times he indulged in debauchery. The tautological excess of his words: "licentious wantonness and lascivious indulgence" and "the filthy dirt of wickedness" emit a palpable disgust at his actions.⁶⁶ Having rejected this earlier lifestyle, there is, however, no indication in any of his works that he married or fathered a family. He apparently had a low opinion of women. Elsewhere he writes of "a feeblar sex, in whose narrow mind a frail intelligence tosses lightly on a tide of sin".⁶⁷ The women he could admire were his beloved virginal martyrs, Eulalia and Agnes, whose deaths he celebrated in his martyr poems.⁶⁸ Unable to accept less than these impossibly perfect women, perhaps he did take up some form of celibate life within his 'villa-based' existence.⁶⁹

While his early days seem full of regrets, Christian humility fails to constrain Prudentius' undisguised pride that his distinction in rhetoric led to a subsequent

I. IX.14 -15, (CCSL 27: 8 -9); See C. Chin, *Grammar and Christianity in the Late Roman World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 111-118 for further discussion of corporal punishment by grammarians.

⁶³ Ausonius, *Opera*. In his *Commemoratio Professorum Burdigalensium*, Ausonius lists teachers of rhetoric practising in Bordeaux, 46-66. He also pays tribute to Dynamius, a rhetorician who taught in Lerida, Spain, *Commemoratio Professorum*, no.23 at 66; Palmer, *Prudentius*, 23, quotes a fifth-century addition to Jerome's *Chronicle* for 355AD which refers to "Petrus Caesaraugusta orator insignis docet". PLRE I, 'Petrus I', 691.

⁶⁴ *Praef.* (CCSL 126:1.lines 8-9,13-15); Augustine, *Confessionum Libri XIII*, IV, II.2 (CCSL 27: 40, lines 1-5); VI.VI.9 (CCSL 27: 79, lines 9-10).

⁶⁵ C.Humfress, *Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity* (Oxford; Oxford University Press,2007). Ch.6 is on the importance of Christians as forensic advocates,179-195 - Prudentius at 194; A. Coskun in 'Zur Biographie des Prudentius', *Philologus* 152 (2008), suggests that this practice took place in Tarraco, 294-319 at 297 (this would explain Prudentius' familiarity with the cult of Fructuosus).

⁶⁶ *Praef.* (CCSL 126:1.lines 10-12): "lasciva protervitas et luxus petulans ... nequitiae sordibus ac luto".

⁶⁷ *Ham.* (CCSL 126:126, lines 277-278): "haec sexus male fortis agit, cui pectore in arto mens fragilis facile vitiorum fluctuat aestu" (tr.) Thomson, 223.

⁶⁸ *Pe.III*; *Pe XIV*. See Chapter 3 for an analysis of these two poems.

⁶⁹ As pursued by Lucinius and Theodora. See above, n.35.

career within the imperial government. He states that “twice I governed noble cities, rendering good justice to men”, followed by the words “his Grace the Emperor advanced me in his service and raised me up, attaching me closer to him and bidding me stand closer to him and bidding me stand in the nearest rank”.⁷⁰ These rather vague verses have been interpreted as showing that Prudentius twice held provincial governorships, and was subsequently promoted to a position at the Western court in Milan, during the imperial reign of the Spaniard, Theodosius I (379-395AD) - although Theodosius himself was mainly based in Constantinople.⁷¹ This scenario is perfectly plausible, although it is surprising that he held the position of *praeses* or governor twice since a later law of Honorius reveals that this practice met with condemnation.⁷² Although he was most likely a provincial governor, it is also plausible that his role in ruling cities was of a lesser status, perhaps that of a city magistrate, such as a *curator*.⁷³ He may have been one of the *duoviri*, which might explain Prudentius’ use of the plural, *reximus*.⁷⁴ This was still a significant position, being chief financial officer and chief interlocutor with the Imperial government. We can only theorise as to what he meant by “standing close to the Emperor” and in fact which emperor. Although Prudentius reveals himself to be an admirer of Theodosius, he could have served his son, Honorius, who acceded to his father in 395AD as emperor in the west.⁷⁵ Prudentius may have been attached to one of the *scrinia* at court or he may have held a rank of ‘*comes primi ordinis*’, perhaps only in a titular capacity.⁷⁶ At the same time in Italy another poet, Claudian, seems also to have held

⁷⁰ *Praef.* (CCSL 126:1, lines 16-21): “bis...nobilium reximus urbium, ius civile bonis reddidimus...militiae gradu evectum pietas principis extulit adsumptum propius stare iubens ordine proximo” (tr.) Thomson, 2-5; Jones in LRE. I, at 387, comments on advocacy as a common route to an administrative position.

⁷¹ Palmer, *Prudentius* 3, in particular, places Prudentius with certainty at the Imperial court in Milan, in contact with influential fellow Spaniards and the city’s bishop, Ambrose. Theodosius, himself, in fact, was only in Milan and Italy from 388-391. Also Prudentius never mentions the city; Mastrangelo, more recently is also convinced of this scenario as a fact, in *The Roman Self*, 8; J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and the Imperial Court AD 364-425* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), similarly, in his earlier work placed Prudentius at the Italian Court, 320.

⁷² LRE.I, 385 on the practice; *C.Th.* 9.26.4 (given at Ravenna, Mar 15, 416AD).

⁷³ M. Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain and Its Cities* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 44. The name of a curator was still extant in fourth-century Tarraconensis, CIL 2:4112.

⁷⁴ Palmer explains the plural “reximus” as showing pride, *Prudentius*, 24, n.67.

⁷⁵ A. Coskun, ‘Zur Biographie’, 297-304. Coskun supports the theory that Prudentius’ emperor was Honorius. Coskun proposes that the normal period of service as an advocate in the courts was twenty years, and if Prudentius served this period, followed by his ruling of “nobilium...urbium”, it would be reasonable to suppose he then served as a higher official under Honorius from 395-400AD.

⁷⁶ Palmer, *Prudentius*, 26-31 and Thomson, *Prudentius*, viii; PLRE I, 214, ‘Aur. Prudentius Clemens’.

some sort of governmental post.⁷⁷ Although we know from the *Peristephanon* that Prudentius visited Italy, his actual career need not have taken him outside of Spain (perhaps no further than the Hispano-Roman capital at Mérida) as there is no evidence to show that he mixed with the great and good at court.⁷⁸ We only have his view of his advancement. He was probably one of the ‘new men’ of the expanding bureaucracy of the fourth century, which might explain his failure to disclose his family roots in the *Praefatio*, who by talent and the use of patronage and influence – *suffragium* – and, as often as not, the exchange of money, moved up the social scale.⁷⁹ Exactly what Prudentius’ administrative responsibility was, to quote Lavarenne, “nous ne savons pas au juste laquelle”.⁸⁰

The *Praefatio* concludes with Prudentius’ summary of the means by which his poems will honour God. His voice will “with hymns” “link the days together”, “fight against heresies, expound the Catholic faith, trample on the rites of the heathen, strike down the idols, devote song to the martyrs and praise the apostles”.⁸¹ The list seems to correspond, in the following order, to the works known as the *Cathemerinon*, *Apotheosis*, *Hamartigenia*, *Peristephanon* X (on St. Romanus), *Contra Symmachum* I and II, and the remaining *Peristephanon* poems. It does not appear to include the *Psychomachia* and the *Tituli Historiarum*. It is therefore assumed that the *Praefatio* was planned as an accompaniment to a published collection, containing all or some of his poems.⁸² When including Prudentius in his

⁷⁷ LRE. I, 377-8; A. Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the court of Honorius*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), at 390 references *Carmina Minora* xxii where Claudian’s *cingulum* and *militia* are mentioned. Cf. Prudentius’ own “militiae gradu”, *Praef.* (CCSL 126: 1, line 19).

⁷⁸ C. Witke in *Numen Literarum: The Old and the New in Poetry from Constantine to Gregory the Great* (Leiden: Brill, 1971) notes that his contemporaries are silent about him, 105; Lana, *Due Capitoli*, 19-20, discusses the possibility of Prudentius’ post being in Illyria, based on his poem on Quirinus of Siscia (*Pe. VII*), but Prudentius’ misplacing of Quirinus tomb in Siscia, rather than Rome, must throw doubts on this position, and his knowledge of the province. The possibility of him being at Mérida is strengthened by his poem to Eulalia, since *Pe. III* represents the only Spanish martyr poem not from Tarraconensis.

⁷⁹ LRE. I, 391-4 on the necessity of influence and money to enter the imperial bureaucracy; See also C. Kelly, *Ruling the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2004), chapter 4, especially 158-61, on money as the “currency of access”; A career in rhetoric seems often to have been a route to success, as in the cases of the Gauls: Exsuperius, a rhetor, who went on to become a governor in Spain, Ausonius, *Commemoratio Professorum*, no. 17, 60 and Pacatus, Theodosius’ panegyricist, who became a proconsul in Africa, *Pacatus: Panegyric to the Emperor Theodosius* (tr.) C. Nixon (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1987), 3-5.

⁸⁰ Lavarenne, *Prudence*, vii.

⁸¹ *Praef.* (CCSL 126:2, lines 38-42), (tr.) Thomson.

⁸² The earliest known collection from 527 appears to have contained only *Cath.*, *Apoth.*, *Ham.*, *Psych.* *Pe.* 1-V. 142. See M. Cunningham, ‘Some facts about the Puteanus of Prudentius’, *Transactions of the*

fifth-century *de viris inlustribus*, Gennadius seems to suggest that at the time the individual books were separate.⁸³ Prudentius' use of the iussive subjunctive at *Praefatio*, lines 37 to 43, however, implies that the poems have yet to be written.⁸⁴ In any case, it seems that by around 405AD, the date of the *Praefatio*, Prudentius had already written *Contra Symmachum* II, since this refers to the battle of Pollentia against the Goths of 402AD, but not to the subsequent battle of Verona against them in 403AD.⁸⁵ It is probable that such a large volume of work was written over a number of years, but was not ready for publication as a whole until 404/5AD. One must assume that any remaining unpublished works were finalised not long after that date, if, as suggested above, Prudentius did not survive beyond 410AD.⁸⁶ The fact that Jerome does not consider Prudentius for his *de viris inlustribus*, drawn up in 392AD, does not mean that Prudentius was not in the public domain at that date, merely that he had little contact with influential figures in Rome or further afield, such as Jerome himself, Ambrose or Augustine.⁸⁷ This omission would seem to confirm that at that time his audience was not in Italy, or in the East, but that it was closer to home.⁸⁸ We thus need to establish where the earliest targets of his proselytism and his propagation of the Christian message might have been located.

III. The Hispania of Prudentius: Historical Context and Background.

Although we must not overlook the possibility that Prudentius' words may have appealed to the elite at the imperial courts, the audience Prudentius intended initially to attract and entertain in the role of a 'villa-poet' would most likely have been the elite who were living in Hispania, and possibly in Southern Gaul.⁸⁹ For this reason, in this section, I pursue a brief exploration of the state of the poet's home province as it was in the latter part of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth.

Proceedings of the American Philological Society, 89 (1958), 32-37, for the probability that this was independently put together by a collector in the sixth century, 37.

⁸³ Gennadius, *de viris inlustribus*, *Hieronymus und Gennadius* (ed.), C. Bernoulli (Freiburg; Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsbuchhandlung von J.C.B.Mohr, 1895), no. 13, 66 (a continuation of Jerome's work of 392AD).

⁸⁴ See Palmer, *Prudentius*, for detailed discussion, 18, n.38.

⁸⁵ *CS. I* (CCSL 126:236, lines 715-720).

⁸⁶ See n.23 above.

⁸⁷ Cameron, *Claudian*, Appendix B, II, traces parallels between the verses of Claudian and Prudentius, but concludes, however, that Prudentius could have had access to Claudian's work rather than vice-versa.

⁸⁸ Palmer, *Prudentius*, 26,30. I disagree with Palmer's assumption that Prudentius was situated at the Imperial court in Milan, see n.71 above.

⁸⁹ Bowes, *Private Worship*, 179-80, comments on "villa-poets" like Prudentius, Ausonius and Sidonius Apollinaris who wrote in the shadow of the great villas of Hispania and Southwestern Gaul.

We have as evidence for the early receipt of his verses by a Hispano-Roman audience the *Peristephanon* poem on Hippolytus which was directed to his local bishop, Valerianus.⁹⁰ We also have references in his poems which encourage and exhort his local listeners and readers to celebrate Spanish saints.⁹¹ Regarding his putative audience in Gaul, there is an intriguing entry in the Gallic Chronicle of 452AD, the first independent record of the poet. Entered for the year 397AD this records: “Prudentius, our lyric poet, a Spaniard by his illustrious birth, developed the strength of his talents”.⁹² This seems to suggest the dissemination of his works amongst Gallic readers as early as the fourth century, especially since the 452 Chronicle may have been based on an earlier version, now lost. His words also emphasise the Spanish identity of the poet in the eyes of his Gallic readers. It is arguable whether his poems *Contra Symmachum* I and II were aimed specifically at the upper classes of Rome.⁹³ These appeals to resist the revival of the old religious rites may well have been essentially vehicles for Prudentius’ anti-pagan propaganda, used as a hook to the Altar of Victory dispute (as Ambrose styled it).⁹⁴ However, although I do not see the educated elite of Rome as the prime target of Prudentius’ verses, many of his Hispano-Gallic audience were also likely to have been taught, as Prudentius was, in the traditional schools of grammar and rhetoric, thus enabling them to respond to the many classical references in his works.

The Hispano-Gallic elite formed a small world and Prudentius’ poetry would have been spread through close personal connections within aristocratic and ecclesiastical networks. Prudentius’ immediate contacts may well have been those in his home territory, easily reached along the valley of the Ebro, although his recital of the home towns of Spanish martyrs in *Peristephanon* IV provides a sign of his desire to

⁹⁰ *Pe.XI* (CCSL 126: 370, line 2).

⁹¹ For example, *Pe.I* (CCSL 126: 255-6, lines 115-20); *Pe.IV*, (CCSL 126:293, lines 193-200).

⁹² Gallic Chronicle 452, “Prudentius lyricus poeta noster Hispanus genere inlustre ingenii sui robur exercet”, 71, line 37, at 397AD. R.Burgess, ‘The Gallic Chronicle: A New Critical Edition with a Brief Introduction’ in R.Mathisen and D. Shanzer (eds.) *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 52-84; There is also the later fifth-century evidence of Gennadius, in *de viris inlustribus*, and Sidonius Apollinaris that he was popular in Gaul: Sidonius Apollinaris, *Poems and Letters* (ed. and tr.) W. Anderson (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1956-65). Sidonius lists books read by his correspondent, Donidius, as being by Augustine, Varro, Horace and Prudentius, Bk II, 451, 9.4.

⁹³ As discussed in J.Harries, ‘Prudentius and Theodosius’ *Latomus*, 43 (1984), 69-84.

⁹⁴ This took place originally in 384AD, while *CS.II* was written c.402AD; N.McLynn, ‘Pagans in a Christian Empire’, in P. Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (Malden, Ma.; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 572-587. In this McLynn states that Ambrose had manipulated Symmachus’ plea on behalf of traditional cults into a major dispute (subsequently picked up as a present threat by Prudentius in his own work), 581-2.

connect his poetry inclusively to people and places in the rest of Hispania. This poem, with its references to towns scattered across the peninsula, is also a useful reminder and aide-memoire as to the geographic diversity of Spain and the distinct regions which were formed by its landscape.⁹⁵ The *Peristephanon* poem begins with a celebration of the martyrs from Zaragoza.⁹⁶ This city was located like Prudentius' town of Calagurris in the north-east of the country, in the province of Tarraconensis, on the flat table-lands along the Ebro. This great river fulfilled an important role as a highway between its source in the Cantabrian mountains in the north-west and its delta on the Mediterranean coast near Tarragona, since north-eastern Spain was to some extent cut off from the rest of the peninsula by mountain ranges to the south. Tarragona, Gerona and Barcelona lay on the more climatically forgiving Tarraconensis coastline of the Mediterranean, which provided access to routes to Rome and the East and to the sea's valuable resources.⁹⁷ Further south down this sometimes jagged, sometimes gentle coast lay Sagunto and Valencia in Carthaginiensis.⁹⁸ Within the interior of Carthaginiensis was a high central plateau, almost surrounded by mountains, the *meseta*. Situated in the southern part of this was the town of Complutum.⁹⁹ The southernmost province was Baetica, home to Córdoba.¹⁰⁰ This lies on the river Guadalquivir – its rich olive-growing valley forming a route to the innermost areas of Southern Spain. In Lusitania, Mérida too was built on the fertile valley of a river.¹⁰¹ This was the Guadiana, which together with the other great rivers which cross the Western coastal plain, the Tagus and the Duero, runs from central Spain west to the Atlantic Ocean. Across the straits in North Africa was the city of Tangiers in Tingitania, which, by the fourth century had become a Spanish Province.¹⁰² The final region of Spain, the rugged and remote north-west corner, Gallaecia, provided no martyr for Prudentius to recall, but perhaps this is apposite for a province where the schismatic Priscillian, executed so recently

⁹⁵ See Map of Late Fourth-Century Hispania, 253.

⁹⁶ *Pe.IV* (CCSL 126:286.lines1-4). The eighteen martyrs of Caesaraugusta. For simplicity future references in the text will mainly use modern names.

⁹⁷ *Pe.IV* (CCSL 126:287), Tarraco's Saints Fructuosus, Augurius and Eulogius, line 23; Gerunda's St.Felix, line 30; Barchinon's St Cucufas, line 33.

⁹⁸ *Pe.IV* (CCSL 126: 289, lines 96-100), St. Vincent died at Valentia but was buried at Saguntus.

⁹⁹ *Pe.IV* (CCSL 126:287, lines 41-4), Saints Justus and Pastor of Complutum (Alcalá de Henares).

¹⁰⁰ *Pe.IV* (CCSL 126:186.line 19), Saints Asiclus and Zoellus and the three "coronas" of Corduba.

¹⁰¹ *Pe.IV* (CCSL 126: 287, line37), St. Eulalia from Emerita (Lusitanorum caput oppidorum).

¹⁰² *Pe.IV* (CCSL 126: 287, line 45), Tingis' St.Cassian (not the Cassian of *Pe.IX* who will be discussed in Chapter 4).

around 385AD, was revered and celebrated as a martyr.¹⁰³ Significantly, *Peristephanon* IV also includes the saints Paulus and Genesius, from Narbonne and Arles respectively. This fact, together with the evidence from the Gallic Chronicle, supports the proposition that the peoples of these cities in Gaul should be included in the circle of his contemporary intended and actual audience.¹⁰⁴

The elite of fourth-century Spain have acquired a reputation for the size and wealth of their properties and possessions. As will be described more fully in Chapter Two, we have physical evidence for vast establishments, which were important economic centres, such as La Olmeda, where the *dominus* must have ruled like a minor king. Chavarría Arnau's 2007 book on villas has explored this late Roman renaissance in residential building in the Spanish countryside, and the evidence for a flourishing rural economy.¹⁰⁵ However, we should not forget that the great aristocratic villas co-existed alongside residences, perhaps similar to that of Prudentius, which were comparatively, although comfortably, modest. Chavarría Arnau demonstrates that many of these lesser establishments were also characterised by productive functions, which often formed part of the residential buildings, showing a close involvement by their owners in the rural economy.¹⁰⁶ She also suggests that the topographical relationship between many villas and the cities of Hispania indicates a continuing involvement of the elite in urban administration.¹⁰⁷ Traditional ideas that the towns themselves were in decline during the fourth century have more recently been challenged. While Simon Keay concluded that there was "an increasing neglect of [Spanish] towns by the elite", Michael Kulikowski qualifies this view by proposing that recent archaeology shows that, although there were physical changes, many fourth-century cities such as Mérida, Barcelona and Córdoba prospered and were revived with richly decorated homes.¹⁰⁸ Prudentius' own town of Calagurris is

¹⁰³ H. Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 150, Priscillian's shrine appears to have been located in Galicia.

¹⁰⁴ *Pe. IV* (CCSL 126: 287. lines 34-6).

¹⁰⁵ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*; See also A. Chavarría Arnau, 'Reflexiones sobre el final de las villas tardorromanas en la Tarraconense', in U. Espinosa Ruiz, S. Castellanos (eds.), *Comunidades locales y dinámicas de poder en el norte de la Península Ibérica durante La Antigüedad Tardía* (Logroño: Universidad de La Rioja, 2006), 19-39.

¹⁰⁶ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 157.

¹⁰⁷ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 157.

¹⁰⁸ S. Keay, 'Recent Archaeological Work', 201; M. Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain and its Cities* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 109-124; M. Kulikowski, 'Cities and Government in Late Antique Hispania: Recent Advances and Future Research' in Bowes and Kulikowski, *Hispania*, 32-76; See also J. Arce, A. Chavarría, G. Ripoll, 'The Urban Domus in late Antique Hispania: Examples from Emerita, Barcino and Complutum', in L. Lavan (ed.), *Housing in Late*

typical of this complex situation, for although the remains of detailed fourth-century mosaics have been found there, indicating an active local aristocracy, there are also signs of contemporaneous degradation of the fabric of the town.¹⁰⁹ Prudentius' writing, nevertheless, complements the more positive urban picture in Hispania. To him, Mérida, the capital of Hispania and home to the martyr Eulalia was still a powerful and populous city: "*urbe potens, populis locuples*".¹¹⁰

It was from Mérida that the administration of the *Diocesis Hispaniorum* was administered, and it is feasible that Prudentius knew this city while serving as a government official there, since along with Tarragona, Zaragoza and Calagurris, it receives special mention in the *Peristephanon* poems. However, apart from his own words in the *Praefatio*, we have no information as to his status within the Imperial bureaucratic hierarchy. Within this bureaucracy the highest ranking personage and senior administrator in Hispania was the *vicarius*.¹¹¹ He was only subordinate to the Praetorian Prefect of Gaul (which included Britain and Spain) and, of course the Emperor himself. Below the *vicarius* in the hierarchy of government were the governors of the six provinces already mentioned, which made up the *diocesis* – Tarraconensis, Carthaginiensis, Baetica, Lusitania, Gallaecia and Mauretania Tingitania.¹¹² The latter, although located in Africa, was close enough in distance from mainland Spain to understandably be administered from there.¹¹³ This governmental structure survived until the Balearic Islands were detached from Carthaginiensis in the late fourth century.¹¹⁴ At the beginning of the fourth century the rank of governor was more usually an equestrian post carrying the rank of

Antiquity: From Palaces to Shops (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 305-335, on lavishly redecorated town houses which frequently replaced the early Roman public buildings in the Fourth century.

¹⁰⁹ U. Espinosa Ruiz, *La Ciudad en la Valle del Ebro durante la Antigüedad Tardía* (Logroño: Gobierno de la Rioja, 1981), 43; U. Espinosa Ruiz, '*Civitates y territoria en el Ebro Medio: continuidad y cambio durante la Antigüedad Tardía*, in Espinosa, Castellanos, *Comunidade locales*, 41-99, at 49-51; Illustration 24, Appendix B, Calagurris mosaic.

¹¹⁰ *Pe. III* (CCSL 126: 278, line 8).

¹¹¹ Another senior post, *comes hispaniarum*, existed until Constantine's death when it was abolished by his sons. A. Chastagnol, 'Les Espagnols dans l'Aristocratie Gouvernementale à l'Époque de Théodose', in *Les Empereurs Romains d'Espagne* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la recherche scientifique, 1965), 269-92.

¹¹² Their respective capitals being: Tarragona, Cartagena, Córdoba, Mérida, Braga and Tangiers. Chastagnol in 'Les Espagnols', 270-1, summarises the governmental reforms of Diocletian recorded in the *Laterculus Veronensis* (dated by T. Barnes to 314AD), which increased the number of Spanish provinces from three to six, and thus the number of gubernatorial posts.

¹¹³ See Kulikowski, 'Cities and Government', 43-5, for discussion on the inclusion of Tingitania, noting Mérida was probably made capital because of its situation between Africa and Northern Spain.

¹¹⁴ Chastagnol, 'Les Espagnols', 278. The *Insulae Baleares* appear first as a province in the *laterculus* of Polemius Silvius in 398.

perfectissimus.¹¹⁵ However, at the end of the century, due to Constantine upgrading some governorships and opening them up to senators, there were two grades, *vir perfectissimus* and *vir clarissimus*, and by the beginning of the fifth century all governors were *clarissimi*.¹¹⁶

Unfortunately we know little personally about these administrators in Spain. Although the epigraphic corpus of Hispania has increased in the last thirty years, we only have the names of fifteen vicars of Spain active between the Diocletian reforms and Prudentius' probable date of demise, and nineteen governors in the same period.¹¹⁷ Of the vicars it seems only one, Marinianus, can be identified as Spanish.¹¹⁸ Of the governors, none, with certainty, according to Chastagnol, can be said to be natives of Hispania.¹¹⁹ For the vicars, Hispania seems to have been a stepping stone to greater things, as most of those identified moved on to more senior posts in the rest of the Empire.¹²⁰ There is little evidence of the subsequent careers of most of the governors. A few attained higher ranks beyond Spain, but most fade into obscurity, as far as the records are concerned.¹²¹ Therefore, with so little information available concerning Spanish imperial personnel it is difficult to place Prudentius within any pattern of gubernatorial appointment and advancement for Hispano-Romans. If we assume that he was a governor of a city, or cities in Hispania, it is also difficult to exactly determine his status in this post. Of the six known late fourth-century Spanish governors, all were *clarissimi* (including one proconsul), but with such a small sample any definite conclusions are unwise.¹²²

There are also problems in assessing the religious affiliations of those who wielded political power in Hispania. We know that Vettius Agorius Praetextatus was governor of Lusitania not long before 362AD. He was commemorated as holding a number of pagan priesthoods and is recorded as performing the taurobolium in Rome

¹¹⁵ Chastagnol, 'Les Espagnols', 271

¹¹⁶ LRE.I, 106-7, 378-9.

¹¹⁷ PLRE I, Vicars, 1080, PLRE II, 1276; Governors, PLRE I, 1089-90. Only six of these date to Prudentius' lifetime.

¹¹⁸ Chastagnol, 'Les Espagnols', 278; PLRE I, 559-600; Symmachus, MGH 6, 79,3.25.2. Even this is insecure as he could be from Galatia or Gallacia.

¹¹⁹ Chastagnol, 'Les Espagnols', 278-84.

¹²⁰ Chastagnol, 'Les Espagnols', 274-8.

¹²¹ The most notable and exceptional being Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, governor of Lusitania, who became PPO Italiae Illyricae et Africae in 384AD, PLRE I, 722-4.

¹²² Germanianus, Caelestinus, (I)sphangius of Baetica, Praetextatus, and Volventius of Lusitania, PLRE I, 1089; Ausonius' relative, Paulinus, *corrector* of Tarraco, whom Chastagnol describes as "sans doute v.c.", Ausonius, *Opera*, 'Parentalia', 24 at 43.

in 372AD.¹²³ Less than forty years later, however, the vicar of Spain was a devout Christian, Petronius, who would later write a book on episcopal ordinations.¹²⁴ Although from this it might seem that the committed Christian Emperor Theodosius' accession in 379AD had changed the spiritual ethos of political life, we should also note that one of Petronius' successors, Macrobius (399 to 401AD), later an African proconsul, was described as the last pagan aristocrat in Africa.¹²⁵ Thus the picture of the religious attachments of the governmental officers of Spain cannot be focused too clearly. In Prudentius' view even the most efficient imperial administrator would be flawed if he did not follow the one true God, as is shown by his attitude to the Emperor Julian. He still remembered with discomfort his boyhood when Julian governed the Empire. Prudentius expresses deep admiration for this emperor as a "brave leader ... a lawgiver, famous for speech and action" and one who cared for the country's welfare, but in the final judgement he finds him irreparably damaged by his love of the old gods.¹²⁶ Although Julian was "*non perfidus orbi*" (the Roman Empire being 'the *orbis*'), he was "*perfidus ... deo*".¹²⁷

The ruler for whom Prudentius reserved his greatest reverence was the devoutly Christian Theodosius I (379-395AD). In 391AD Theodosius banned sacrifices and access to temples and pagan shrines.¹²⁸ Prudentius, whose references to emperors can seem sometimes wilfully oblique, clearly marks in his poetry his admiration for Theodosius for carrying out this positive pro-Christian act. Theodosius was "the illustrious father" of his country who prohibited the mistaken belief in the ancient gods; the "unconquered emperor" who renewed the life of Rome soiled by her long association with pagan deities.¹²⁹ In fact, Theodosius' religious policies have influenced how modern scholars assess the reputation of elite Spaniards in Late Antiquity. To quote John Matthews, they appear:

to stand for the ideals of a new and eager Christian piety, as they
contribute their efforts to the enforcement of western orthodoxy in

¹²³ Symmachus, MGH 6, 24,47.2, to Praetextatus, "sentries ius sacerdotis"; PLRE I, 722; CIL: 1778 and 1779, 397.

¹²⁴ PLRE II, Petronius 1, 862.

¹²⁵ Chastagnol, 'Les Espagnols', 277.

¹²⁶ *Apoth.* (CCSL 126:92, lines 449-453).

¹²⁷ *Apoth.* (CCSL 126: 92, line 454).

¹²⁸ *C.Th.* 16.10.10. (given at Milan, Feb.24, 391AD).

¹²⁹ *CS.I* (CCSL 126: 182, lines 9-11); *CS.II* (CCSL 126: 234, line 656) (tr.) Thomson.

the east, and make their personal connections in the world of eastern asceticism ... It would be a natural inference that [their] zealous evangelism ... was a product of their Spanish home environment, from which they took it to the east in the time of Theodosius. But the direct evidence remains elusive. In supporting their compatriot, these Spaniards have acquired a reputation which they would not have acquired, had they remained at home – so far does our knowledge of their activities abroad outstrip the information which is available on the progress of Christianity itself in Spanish society.¹³⁰

The evidence, however, for the existence of a tightly-formed and powerful Spanish Christian group becomes less convincing on closer examination.¹³¹ It has been assumed that Theodosius and his Hispanic clan were staunchly pro-Nicene in their beliefs, in contrast to the pro-Arian stance of previous emperors Constantius II and Valens.¹³² One of the earliest acts of Theodosius, effectively aimed at Arian sympathizers, in February 380AD was to outlaw doctrines which did not follow the Nicene belief in a ‘single deity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit’. Furthermore, all subjects were expected to embrace the name of Catholic Christians and any dissenters would be judged insane and heretical, and their meeting-places denied the name of churches.¹³³

However, as Neil McLynn has suggested, this pro-Nicene legislation, rather than being a product of ‘Spanish’ influence, was probably made by a new emperor, lacking experience of the Eastern provinces and under pressure from episcopal lobbyists in Thessalonica, where the law was issued.¹³⁴ In this context we should remember the characterization by Jill Harries of the *Theodosian Code* as “a compendium of imperial responses to stimuli which were largely external”.¹³⁵ The picture of Theodosius as a “devout Nicean in keeping with his whole Spanish

¹³⁰ Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, 146-7.

¹³¹ N. McLynn, ‘*Genere Hispanus*’: Theodosius, Spain and Nicene Orthodoxy’ in Bowes and Kulikowski, *Hispania*, 77-120, 94ff.

¹³² S.Williams, G.Freill, *Theodosius: The Empire at Bay* (London: Batsford, 1994), 52.

¹³³ *C.Th.* 16.1.2. (given at Thessalonica, Feb 27, 380AD).

¹³⁴ McLynn, ‘*Genere Hispanus*’, 86-7, also points out that Theodosius’ next pronouncement on divine substance was more nuanced in *C.Th.* 16.5.6 (given at Constantinople, Jan. 10, 381AD).

¹³⁵ J. Harries and I. Wood, *The Theodosian Code* (London: Duckworth, 1993), 15.

background” has been painted with too broad a brushstroke.¹³⁶ (One should not forget the lapse of bishops Ossius of Córdoba and Potamius of Lisbon into ‘Arianism’ in 357AD).¹³⁷ Although this viewpoint should not be completely discarded - the evidence of a Spanish Nicene credo lies with Prudentius, himself, whose literary aspirations were to fight against heresies and to expound the Catholic faith – we must note that the actual text of the Nicene creed itself does not appear to have arrived in Hispania until nearly forty years after Nicaea.¹³⁸ This was placed at the head of the second edition of the Spanish bishop Gregory of Elvira’s tract, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, in around 364AD.¹³⁹ If Hispano-Romans had been slow to become informed regarding the creed, this might explain Prudentius’ emphasis on the need for orthodox belief among his audience, and perhaps also throws further doubt on Theodosius’ ‘Spanish’ affinity with the Nicene doctrine.

In fact, even the concept of Theodosius bringing a ready-made Spanish government with him to the East is questionable since it was several years before any Spaniards became prominent in his administration.¹⁴⁰ His uncle, Flavius Eucherius, was not inaugurated consul until 381AD, and possibly another relative-in-law also held the consulship at the same time.¹⁴¹ Thereafter we find that his presumed brother-in-law, Nebridius, was *comes rerum privatarum* and city prefect of Constantinople.¹⁴² Nummius Aemilius Dexter, son of bishop Pacianus of Barcelona, and the inspiration behind Jerome’s *de viris inlustribus*, was proconsul of Asia and *comes rerum privatarum* of the East.¹⁴³ Another Spaniard, Maternus Cynegius, although also devoutly Christian, was, less worthily, famous for violent attacks on

¹³⁶ Williams and Friell, *Theodosius*, 52.

¹³⁷ V.Escribano Paño, ‘Heresy and Orthodoxy in Fourth-Century Hispania: Arianism and Priscillianism’ in Bowes and Kulikowski, *Hispania*, 121-149, at 141: Potamius, *Potamii Episcopi Olisponensis Opera Omnia*, (CCSL 69A) (M.Conti), 57-63.

¹³⁸ *Praef.* (CCSL 126: 2,line39). (Although Arians would have considered that they were the ones following the orthodox faith).

¹³⁹ J.Ulrich, ‘Nicaea and the West’, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 51, 1 (1997), 10-24, at 20.

¹⁴⁰ McLynn, ‘*Genere Hispanus*’, 95; For example, Neoterius (PLRE. I, 623) PPO of the East in 380-1, was not Spanish, and Olybrius (PLRE. I,641), whom Prudentius praises for his Christianity in *CS.I* (CCSL 126:205, lines 554-7), had already held this post before Theodosius’ arrival.

¹⁴¹ Chastagnol, *Les Espagnols*, 288; *Politics, Philosophy, and Empire in the Fourth-Century, Select Orations of Themistius* (tr.) P. Heather, D. Moncur (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press,2001), Or.16, 270-1. Themistius explains honours were given according to virtue not family proximity. See n.215 for the identity of the in-law.

¹⁴² Chastagnol, *Les Espagnols*, 289 for details of his career.

¹⁴³ PLRE. I, 251; Jerome, *de viris inlustribus, Hieronymus und Gennadius, Prologus*, 1.4, “de viris Inlustribus ad Dextrum praetorio praefectum Italiae”.

temples in Syria and Egypt during his prefecture of the East.¹⁴⁴ Other Imperial family members were gathered in Constantinople: Theodosius' Spanish wife, Aelia Flacilla, an avid Christian, and his young son, Arcadius; Flacilla's nephew, another Nebridius, a devoted Christian and the recipient of the admiration of Jerome, no less.¹⁴⁵ Also present were Theodosius' Spanish nieces, Serena, whom he adopted, and Thermantia.¹⁴⁶ The ascetic Melania the Elder and Egeria the pilgrim can also be seen as part of this "*coterie espagnole pieuse*".¹⁴⁷ Beyond this rather limited group it is difficult to find numbers to sustain the modern scholarly idea of Theodosius' putative Spanish entourage. Gonzalez Bravo's proposal that Theodosius' immediate circle was defined not so much by those who shared a common origin, but by those who shared a common ideology, describing them as members of "*un grupo político-ideológico*", perhaps provides a more nuanced view of the Theodosian court.¹⁴⁸

Therefore, it seems plausible that the Christian beliefs of Hispania, which mattered so much to Prudentius, would have held no more importance for Theodosius' court than those of the other provinces of the Empire. Those Spaniards who left Spain, including Theodosius himself, seem to have been Spanish more in ancestry than identity, and did not maintain particular links, religious, cultural or literary, with their homeland.¹⁴⁹ As far as we know, these émigrés, while living, did not return to Hispania.¹⁵⁰ Rather than seeing Theodosius and his circle as bearers of a particular brand of zealous Spanish piety to the East, it may be more apposite to see Spaniards like Prudentius being inspired and influenced by Theodosius' Christian leadership,

¹⁴⁴ Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, 140-42.

¹⁴⁵ McLynn, '*Genere Hispanus*', 98; Jerome, *Epistula* 79 (CSEL 55:87-101). His letter to Salvina, Nebridius' wife, is a eulogy to him. It is assumed he was the son of Theodosius' brother-in-law, Nebridius, PLRE I, 620.

¹⁴⁶ Claudian, *Works*, (ed. and tr.) M. Platnauer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), *Laus Serena*, Vol II, XXX, 63-117. Claudian acclaimed Serena's Spanish roots.

¹⁴⁷ Bowes, ' "une coterie espagnole" ', 190. Although their Spanishness is somewhat debateable.

¹⁴⁸ G.Bravo, 'Prosopografía Civil' in R.Teja (ed.), *La Hispania del siglo IV; Administración, economía, sociedad, cristianización* (Bari: Edipuglia, 2002), 114.

¹⁴⁹ N.McLynn, 'Theodosius, Spain and the Nicene Faith' in R.Teja, C.Pérez (eds.), *Actas: Congreso Internacional La Hispania de Teodosio*, vol.I (Salamanca: Universidad SEK, 1997), 171-178, at 172 proposes that Theodosius, as the son of a Roman general, spent his formative years in army camps, not in Spain.

¹⁵⁰ McLynn in '*Genere Hispanus*', describes Cynegius as "no longer 'Spanish'—just like Theodosius", 119; Theodosius did not return to Spain; Cynegius died in Constantinople, but his body was brought back by his wife for burial in Spain—the *Consularia Constantinopolitana* in 388AD states "et post annum transtulit eum matrona eius Achantia ad Hispanias pedistre", Burgess, *Hydatius*, 242; The wealthy Melania the Elder who owned land in Spain was described by Palladius as "a Spaniard by origin, but afterwards belonged to Rome" in *The Lausiac History of Palladius* (ed. and tr.) W.Lowther Clarke (New York: SPCK, 1918), 147, 46.1.

the Eastern ascetic movement and the Constantinopolitan Christian ethos. In other words ‘influence’ came in a westerly direction towards Hispania instead of vice-versa.¹⁵¹ Any more concrete Prudentian connection with Constantinople must be hypothetical. There is no evidence for either Prudentius or his writings being located in the Eastern Empire at the time.¹⁵² All his early manuscripts are found in the West. We must therefore return to the Iberian peninsula to try to find the audience who might have existed for his works and consider whether they followed Christ as fervently as their better-known expatriate numbers.

Matthews’ assertion, quoted above, concerning our lack of knowledge of the religious beliefs of the Spaniards at home compared to those who went abroad, is valid.¹⁵³ We know from written sources of the existence of Christian communities such as those of Lucinius and Theodora and of Prudentius himself, but how committed to Christianity was the majority of the Hispano-Roman elite who might have formed a significant part of the audience for the poet’s verses? The archaeology of late fourth and early fifth-century Hispania supports few signs of their active participation in Christian activity. There are prestige displays by ostensibly Christian believers. For example, the stunning mosaics at Centcelles villa show Old and New Testament scenes, a chi-rho symbol forms part of fine mosaics at the Villa Fortunatus, and elaborate sarcophagi decorated with biblical images were imported.¹⁵⁴ However, these may well have represented vanity projects of status-seeking elites keeping up with current trends, since it can also be seen that the visual culture of Hispania remained resolutely non-Christian at this time. Secure physical evidence for churches does not occur in Hispania until the fifth or even sixth centuries, as will be discussed in Chapter Two.¹⁵⁵ Evidence for a cult-following for

¹⁵¹ Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, 145 on Theodosian supporters promoting ascetism which had been more firmly established in the East; Jerome had encouraged the Spaniards Lucinius and Theodora in this way of life from his base in the Holy Land, *Ep.* 71 (CSEL 55: 1-7) and 75 (CSEL 55:29-34). Jerome also wrote to a Spanish presbyter, Abigaus, asking him to watch over the widowed Theodora’s lifestyle, *Ep.* 76.3 (CSEL 55: 34-36).

¹⁵² See Bergmann, Lavarenne and Cunningham for details of the earliest extant manuscripts.

¹⁵³ Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, 147, quoted at 29-30 above.

¹⁵⁴ J.Arce, (ed.) *Centcelles: el monument tardorromano: iconografía y arquitectura* (Rome: “L’Erma” di Bretschneider, 2001). This contains a number of articles discussing the site; J. Paz Peralta, ‘Villa Fortunatus’, in M. Escribano Paño y G. Fatás Cabeza (eds.), *La Antigüedad Tardía en Aragón (284-714)* (Zaragoza: Caja de Ahorros de la Inmaculada de Aragón, 2001), 64-79; M.Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos romanos-cristianos de España. Estudio iconográfico* (Granada: Facultad de Teología, 1975); Examples of Christian-themed sarcophagi: Illustrations 11,12, Appendix B.

¹⁵⁵ Chapter 2, 67-75; see also A.Chavarría Arnau, ‘Churches and aristocracies in seventh century Spain’, *EME* 18.2 (2010), 160-174, at 164.

Prudentius' beloved martyrs is also not apparent from the archaeological record before then, as will be seen in Chapter Three. With these facts in mind it becomes clear why it was important to Prudentius to bring Christianity in the form of literature to the learned society of Hispania.

Prudentius was not, however, the first writer to try to reach out to the Hispanic elite with a Christian message couched in words which could be admired by an audience who might have also received a traditional education. The aristocratic Spanish priest, Juvencus, writing c.329AD, had also understood that in order to attract the attention of an audience raised on classical literature he needed to provide the kind of literary fare with which they were familiar.¹⁵⁶ Juvencus rendered the four Gospels in hexameter verses as an epic which was "directed to people possessed of the high degree of education required to appreciate and understand the metre, the style and the allusions of his poem".¹⁵⁷ He provided an alternative to the basic style of the New Testament writers which had been found unacceptable by many among a sophisticated audience.¹⁵⁸ In common with Prudentius, Juvencus' poetry is redolent of the work of the master, Vergil, and it would not be amiss to suggest that his classical approach to Christian texts may have provided inspiration for Prudentius himself.

The fourth century seems to have produced no further Spanish authors with the same literary skills and ambition as Prudentius and Juvencus, but nominal Christians might have been encouraged in the faith by the didactic and homiletic texts of senior churchmen. Letters are known which were written by Ossius of Córdoba, Constantine's senior religious advisor, but his energies were largely directed outside of Hispania. Within the peninsula itself the prose work of Potamius of Lisbon, who died c.357AD, are in part extant.¹⁵⁹ His two *Epistulae* are reaffirmations of his Nicene faith, after his lapse into Arianism. His homilies, *De Lazaro* and *De martyrio Esaiiae*, are significant as in them he used sensational images and descriptions comparable with those found in Prudentius' martyr poems: these works detail

¹⁵⁶ R. Green, *Latin epics of the New Testament. Juvencus, Sedulius, Arator* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-3. Jerome records him in *de viris illustribus* (84), and in his *Chronicle* at 329AD.

¹⁵⁷ Green, *Latin Epics*, 128.

¹⁵⁸ G. Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See 84-5, for clarification of this problem.

¹⁵⁹ Potamius, *Opera*, (CCSL69A:150-267), being 4 entire works and I part.

graphically the horrifying decay of the body of Lazarus and the gruesome death of the martyr Isaiah, albeit written in a cruder Latin lacking the literary quality of the poet.¹⁶⁰ In the mid-fourth century Gregory of Elvira was also producing a number of homiletic texts. These, particularly the *Tractatus Origenis*, furnished his audience with exegesis and commentary on biblical passages, while other works discussed aspects of Christ's divinity, including his *De Fide Orthodoxa* mentioned above, which constituted a defence of the Nicene formula.¹⁶¹ Pacianus of Barcelona, who died before 395AD, wrote as a man educated in the classical tradition, as befitted one connected to Theodosius via his son, Dexter (see above). However, although like Prudentius his work referenced authors such as Vergil, Ovid and Horace, his greatest influences were from biblical sources and Christian writers.¹⁶² His few extant works show a preoccupation with an orthodox 'catholic' position, in particular the condemnation of the schism of Novatianism.¹⁶³ Pacianus' treatise on penitence is of interest vis-a-vis religious beliefs in Hispania at the end of the fourth century, since it reveals that festivals continued to be held in his community which involved indigenous 'pagan' practices¹⁶⁴. Although these authors could have had some doctrinal influence on Prudentius' writing, it is clear from the above that Prudentius' words would have offered a poeticised alternative to the worthily instructional Christian literature of the church hierarchy.

This preliminary introduction to Hispanic society provides a backdrop to the creation of Prudentius' verses. Circumstances in Hispania in the late fourth century seem to have coalesced to furnish a breeding ground for Prudentius' talents: the nascent development of Christian thought and ideas, the potential for 'pagan' recidivism, and the presence of a wealthy and educated elite audience, ripe to receive vibrant and original works quite unlike anything they had encountered before.

¹⁶⁰ Potamius, *Opera, De Lazaro* (CCSL 69A:166-195), *De martyrio Esaiæ Prophetæ* (CCSL 69A: 198-203). Regarding Potamius' peculiar language and style, Conti describes a "disconcerting blend of sensationalism, poetical language, tragic imagery and novel narrative", 127-129, at 129; See Chapter 3, 106-8 below for further discussion of *De martyrio Esaiæ* in connection with Prudentius..

¹⁶¹ F.Buckley, 'St. Gregory of Elvira', *Classical Folia*, 18, 1, (1964), 3-23. Gregory's works are listed and discussed at 22-3; further analysis of his works appears in J. Molina Gómez, 'La exégesis como instrumento de creación cultural. El testimonio de las obras de Gregorio de Elvira', *Antigüedad y Cristianismo*, 17 (2000).

¹⁶² C. Hanson, *Iberian Fathers, vol. 3* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 11-12.

¹⁶³ This schism was also condemned by Prudentius in *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126:370-1, 19-34), see Chapter 4.

¹⁶⁴ In this Pacianus refers back to a now-lost treatise he wrote on this festival, the "Cervulus", I.3 (CCSL 69B: 10).

IV. Thesis Structure and Working Methodology.

The above section gives an indication of the potential audience, intended or actual, for Prudentius' verses. Identifying this group and their religious beliefs is an important part of my thesis and this will be explored and analysed in more detail in Chapter Two. It will be argued that, rather than being centred at the Imperial courts, this was mainly situated in his homeland in Hispania, where an elite led an otiose existence in rural villas, or held the reins of local government from their urban *domus*. They formed a network loosely held together by *paideia*, a shared culture, whose education enabled them to appreciate the classical allusions which pervaded Prudentius' poetry. Particular attention will be paid to the material record as well as the written, in order to establish a picture of who this elite were and how they lived. This will enable us to reclassify Prudentius himself as a Hispano-Roman 'villa-poet'.

Using this same, innovative, interdisciplinary methodology I will explore the religious culture of Hispania and argue that the perceived Christian piety of the Spanish was a false assumption. At the same time I will assess the validity of Prudentius' own concerns regarding pagan beliefs, heresy and schism. In particular the area local to the poet around Calagurris and Zaragoza will be examined for signs of continuing non-Christian worship, especially the frequently overlooked indigenous practices such as rituals involving bull sacrifice. Source materials will include the canons of the fourth-century Councils of Elvira, Zaragoza and Toledo, which provide evidence of the activities of their organised Christian communities, at least as perceived by the Church authorities in Hispania.

Chapter Three contains a close examination of the martyr poems of the *Peristephanon*, in particular those which celebrated the saints of Hispania and to some extent Southern Gaul. These poems had been written as a way of encouraging the adoption of martyr cults among Prudentius' audience. It will consider the extent to which Hispano-Gallic Christian communities had become active participants in the worship of martyrs – an aspect of the Christian religion which had increased in popularity during the fourth century under the influence of figures like the Spanish pope, Damasus. The chapter will examine the textual and, in particular, the archaeological evidence for signs, such as shrines and relics, which might indicate an involvement in the cult of the saints in Hispania. I will question the oft-held

conclusion that the *Peristephanon* poems were evidence of an enthusiastic following for these cults. I suggest that, in fact, the material evidence shows that the opposite was more likely and that Prudentius' writing signified a lack of enthusiasm amongst his audience which he aimed to reverse with his verses.

Chapter Four will return to the martyrdoms of Saints Cassian and Hippolytus, in the form of a case study of the two poems, *Peristephanon* IX and XI, which contain the ekphrasis of the martyr paintings which Prudentius saw in Italy. It will focus on a close reading of these texts, which, excepting the *Praefatio* and the *Epilogus*, are the most intimate of Prudentius' poems. It is significant that in these narratives the poet places himself physically as a suppliant at the tombs of these martyrs, whereas in the other martyr poems he is reporting as an outsider. Prudentius takes a central role in both poems, revealing the extent of his particular and personal connection to the two saints.¹⁶⁵ As with the other *Peristephanon* works, these show Prudentius' intention to raise awareness in his Hispano-Gallic audience of the benefits of prayerfully gaining the protection of martyrs, and he proposed the addition of these saints, venerated in Italy, to the canon of saints honoured in Hispania.¹⁶⁶ Prudentius hoped to communicate that the epiphanies which he had experienced at the tombs had been heightened by viewing the paintings depicting the saints' suffering. Thus he promoted the use of (certain) images as a way of effectively inspiring Christian devotion. The chapter will consider the rhetorical technique of ekphrasis as a means by which images, like those of the martyrs, could be brought before the eyes of the reader or listener. Prudentius' use of ekphrasis in the Hippolytus and Cassian poems will be discussed in relation to the guiding words of the Spanish rhetor Quintilian, and to the texts of other practitioners of this skill, such as Philostratus. I will close this chapter by assessing the physical culture of Italy and elsewhere which might show that Prudentius did actually see the tomb paintings which he found so inspirational and that his descriptions were not just the product of a poetic imagination.

Chapter Five continues the theme of imagery with a detailed examination of the visual culture of Hispania in the fourth and early fifth century as represented by its extant physical remains. Prudentius' Hispano-Gallic audience continued to be

¹⁶⁵ *Pe.IX* (CCSL 126:326, lines 5-12; 329, lines 99-100); *Pe.XI* (CCSL 126:376, lines 177-8).

¹⁶⁶ *Pe.IX* (CCSL 126:329, line 106); *Pe.XI* (CCSL 126: 377, line 234).

surrounded in their private and public places by images derived from the traditions of Greco-Roman classical art particularly in the shape of mosaics and sculptures. The new Christian iconography which appeared from the beginning of the fourth century in funerary contexts enabled only limited encounters with its forms and inherent messages. Therefore in this chapter I propose that in order to picture the Christian images described by the poet in *Peristephanon* IX and XI, Prudentius' audience would have needed to mentally reference the non-Christian traditional art which was familiar to them.

This thesis will conclude with a short chapter summarising the issues raised in the preceding chapters. What began as research on the texts of the two martyr poems on Cassian and Hippolytus has evolved into an examination of their context and the background behind them. In studies of Prudentius scholars have generally focused on his poetic style and his appropriation of classical genres for Christian subject-matter. This thesis will argue that a more accurate picture of Prudentius and his work can be achieved if one explores both the literary and material evidence for the lives that he and his audience led in fourth and fifth-century Hispania. Prudentius himself, of course, reveals in his poetry his attitudes to religious belief, both Christian and non-Christian, society and culture, and to his native '*terra Hibera*'. However, I argue for a different methodological approach. Material culture and the visual record offer resources which can expand our perception of the poet and that of the elite whom he entertained and educated with his Christian messages. Prudentius' intentions were of that moment in time. They were to inspire in his audience the desire to devote themselves to the Christian God. Proof of his ultimate success lies in his later endorsement by Christian luminaries such as Sidonius Apollinaris and Gregory of Tours.¹⁶⁷ But perhaps this *vir Hispanus* would have taken greater pleasure in the future incorporation of his poetry in the Mozarabic Hymnal, and thereby its inclusion in the liturgy of the Spanish Church.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Poems and Letters*, II, letter IX to Donidius; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs* (ed. and tr.) R. Van Dam (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988). Gregory refers to the martyrdoms of Cassian, n.42, and Emeterius and Chelidonius, quoting "Aurelius Clemens" [Prudentius] as his source, n.92.

¹⁶⁸ R.Messenger, 'The Mozarabic Hymnal', *The Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 75 (1944), 103-125, especially at 105; C. Blume, G.Dreves (eds.), 'Die Mozarabischen Hymnen', *Analecta Hymnica*, 27 (Leipzig: 1897), reprinted (New York; London, 1961), 35-41.

CHAPTER TWO

PRUDENTIUS' AUDIENCE AND THEIR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

I. Introduction

In 1988, during the course of excavations at the former Roman town of Vareia, a fine gold and silver piece of jewellery was discovered.¹ Vareia, now a suburb of Logroño, was a late Republican foundation which survived into the latter part of the fifth century. It lay on the riverine corridor of the Ebro at the point where it became navigable.² It was also on the Roman road which led from the North Eastern coast of the Iberian Mediterranean, where lay the ports of Tarraco and Barcino, to Legio (Leon) where the last legion in Hispania was stationed in Late Antiquity. However, more significantly for our purposes, Calagurris, the probable home of Prudentius, was located only 30 kilometres down the Ebro valley from the Vareian excavation site.

This ornament has been dated to the late fourth century, based on stylistic and technical similarities to metalwork produced at that time in the Rhine area.³ It is circular and a substantial 9.8 centimetres in diameter. In the centre is a small silver embossed head with wild and waving hair, which, although somewhat worn, most resembles a representation of Medusa. This head sits on a silver *opus interrasile* base covering a plate made of gold which shines through the intricate fretwork. The whole is encircled with a lace-like fringe in a silver alloy, and is fixed to a ring.

The excavator, Espinosa, suggested that the piece can be identified as a *phalera*, an ornament worn on the breast as a military decoration. He considered this piece to be of such quality that it must have been a *donum militare* to a high-ranking official, either in the army or in the imperial bureaucracy. Espinosa notes the proximity of Prudentius' Calagurris to the find site, and that the poet was typical of the kind of well-off villa-dwellers who would have been living in the Ebro valley. As we saw in Chapter One, Prudentius had held two posts within the imperial bureaucracy – he

¹ U. Espinosa Ruiz and S. Noack-Haley, 'Pieza de Orfebrería Bajoimperial en Vareia (Varea-Logroño, La Rioja)', *Madridrer Mitteilungen*, 32 (1991), 169; Illustration 1, Appendix B.

² Pliny, *Natural History*, 3.21, as noted in F. Beltrán Lloris (ed.), *Zaragoza: Colonia Caesar Augusta* (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2007), 106.

³ Espinosa and Noack-Haley, 174-9, 183. Although the piece was found in early fifth-century destruction levels in Vareia, the excavator compares it to work from late fourth-century workshops around Cologne.

himself referred to his career progress as “*militiae gradu*”.⁴ Espinosa considered that the recipient of the decoration had been an anonymous inhabitant of the Vareian area, who had achieved some prominence in the administration of the Theodosian Empire, as had Prudentius, and had been suitably rewarded for his services with the ornament.⁵

The ornament of Vareia opens up a conduit to considering the social, cultural and religious world in which Prudentius lived and the potential audience whom he hoped to reach with his poetry: topics that will be explored in this chapter. Prudentius’ verses could well have attracted the attention of the elite at the Imperial courts or Rome; however, as we shall see the audience Prudentius intended initially to entertain with his poetry would most likely have been living in Hispania, and probably Southern Gaul, where we know his work was read in the fifth century.⁶ If the ornament belonged to a local Vareian of note, he would most likely have been part of a group of high-ranking persons who occupied the villas around Vareia, Calagurris and along the Ebro.⁷ This social group would seem to have formed a significant part of the immediate audience for Prudentius’ work. His *Peristephanon* poems in particular show his close ties to this region of Hispania, for, as will be seen, in several of these poems he spoke directly to inhabitants of these Pyrenean lands.⁸

The presence of the ‘Medusa’ head in the centre of the ornament is a physical reminder of the cultural background common to many members of Prudentius’ audience. Although impossible to prove conclusively, the owner(s) of this kind of ornament may well have shared a ‘classical’ education with his or her fellow villa-dwellers. Prudentius’ poetry, rich in references to the content and form of Greek and Latin literature and imagery of an earlier age, would have flattered the intelligence and learning of his audience. Knowledge of the classical world, its traditions and iconography, was still relevant amongst high-status members of Hispanic society in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, even amongst those who were or appeared to

⁴ *Praef.* (CCSL 126:1, line19).

⁵ Espinosa and Noack-Haley, 183.

⁶ See Chapter 1, 24.

⁷ See pages 46-50 below for further discussion of the identity of villa-dwellers of this area and of other parts of Hispania.

⁸ See pages 42-43 below.

be Christian.⁹ However, the use of the image of the ‘Medusa’ head does also raise the question of whether adherence to classical traditions, in some cases, might be more than a cultural attachment. Could it point towards a belief in the ‘old’ gods, or at least a lack of commitment to the new God, which Prudentius sought to overcome by promotion of the Christian faith in his verses?

Finally as the decoration was found at a location on a major road likely to have been frequented by the Roman army stationed in north-eastern Hispania, it is just possible that it belonged to and was lost by a member of the military. The piece’s possible origin in Cologne reminds us of the fact that the people of this part of the Ebro valley and its environs, including Calagurris, were connected to other parts of Hispania and the wider Roman Empire, piggybacking perhaps to some extent on the movements of the army. We should also remember that the valley of the Ebro was still a significant commercial and trading highway.¹⁰ Thus, the social, cultural and religious perspectives of Prudentius’ audience would have been expanded by contact with factors external to their immediate surroundings.

This chapter will treat the broader themes which have been highlighted by the above discussion on the ornament found at Vareia. My intention is first to identify the audience which would have been exposed to Prudentius’ poetry; second to evaluate the ways in which that audience formed a social group with shared cultural and educational values; and third to assess the religious practices of that audience in the light of Prudentius’ evident disquiet over the level of its engagement with the Christian faith. In the process consideration will be given to the extent to which these

⁹ A.Cameron, in *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), at 7, notes that pagans themselves did not feel “called upon to defend their culture – or indeed that they saw it as ‘pagan’ culture at all rather than the culture shared by all educated people. For while a few prominent Christian intellectuals attacked the classics (while ostentatiously quoting them in their own writings)”, - (and we might include Prudentius himself among this number): “lay Christian members of the elite continued to enjoy an education that consisted entirely of classics”.

¹⁰ C. Fernández-Ochoa and Á. Morillo, in ‘Walls in the Urban Landscape of Late Roman Spain: Defence and Imperial Strategy’ in Bowes and Kulikowski, *Hispania*, 299-340, suggest that this was part of the annona route supplying grain and olive oil, although it is not clear how important a part Hispania played in this supply system at the end of the fourth century; Cf. Reynolds, n.94 below, on the decline in Baetican oil going to the military and Rome in the later fourth century. The Ebro would also have been a transport route for pottery distributed from sites in its upper valley which were active from the 3rd century until the fifth. P. Reynolds, *Hispania and the Roman Mediterranean, AD100-700* (London: Duckworth, 2010), 60-63, map 7,165; It must also have been the transport route for imported African and Gallic wares found at fourth-century sites in the upper Ebro valley such as Zaragoza and Calagurris, Beltrán Lloris, *Zaragoza*, at 27, and personal observation of fourth-century pottery at Calahorra museum.

topics were affected by influences beyond Prudentius' immediately proximate world of Calagurris and the Ebro valley.

II. Identifying the Audience of the Villa-Poet

It seems probable that the audience Prudentius intended initially to engage and entertain with his poetry would have been those members of elite society living in Hispania and Southern Gaul, although we must not overlook the possibility that his verses were acknowledged beyond this group and these regions during his lifetime. We should also, in spite of Prudentius' own faith and the Christian nature of his poetry, not be tempted to define too clearly the religious allegiances of his audience.¹¹

Prudentius seems to have belonged to a Christian community in and around Calagurris, and it is likely that the poet's most immediate contacts were those in his home territory: the residents of the villas and settlements within comparatively easy reach via the valleys and tributaries of the Ebro and the road networks which spread weblike across the Pyrenean region. Some of Prudentius' *Peristephanon* poems, in which he addressed these people directly, indicate this audience most markedly, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three. In his poem on the martyrs of Calagurris, Emeterius and Chelidonius, he directed his words to the inhabitants of our town: "*nostro oppido*".¹² The fourth *Peristephanon* poem was addressed to the people of Caesaraugusta (Zaragoza) and celebrated the city's eighteen martyrs.¹³ In his poem on the three martyrs of Tarraco Prudentius praised the city which produced these saints, including himself among all the peoples of the Pyrenean lands who were protected by them.¹⁴ We also know that his poem on Saint Hippolytus was directly

¹¹ I quote from P. Garnsey, C. Humfress, *The Evolution of the Late Antique World* (Cambridge: Orchard Academic, 2001) at 133, 134. "Even after the so-called 'Theodosian settlement' ('the legislation of Theodosius I of 391-2, which outlawed traditional Roman religious practices') 'the victory of Christianity over the polytheistic beliefs, practices and institutions of the past was by no means assured'".

¹² *Pe. I* (CCSL 126: 255, line 116): "martyrum cum membra nostro consecravim oppido". In the same poem he also addresses the Vascones, the people of the Basque region, (CCSL 126: 255, line 94).

¹³ *Pe. IV* (CCSL 126: 286, lines 1-4): "Bis novem noster populus sub uno martyrum servat cineres sepulcro, Caesaraugustam vocitamus urbem res cui tanta est".

¹⁴ *Pe. VI* (CCSL 126: 319, lines 142-5): "O triplex honor...quo nostro caput excitatur urbis... exultare tribus libet patronis, quorum praesidio fovemur omnes terrarum populi Pyrenearum".

addressed to his local bishop, Valerianus, most probably of Calagurris.¹⁵ (However, although Prudentius referred to the bishop as “*Christi Valeriane sacer*”, we do not know if he spoke to him as a social equal or as one who respected Valerianus’ episcopal status).¹⁶ Also the recital of the home towns of Spanish martyrs in *Peristephanon* IV provides a sign of Prudentius’ intention to connect his poetry inclusively and beyond his immediate locality to people and places in the rest of Hispania. This poem praising the saints of Zaragoza lists not only saints from the towns of the North East, Tarraco, Gerunda, and Barchinon, but also those from Valentia, Complutum, Corduba, Emerita, and even Tingis in the Hispanic province of African Tingitania.¹⁷

Prudentius also praises martyrs from Narbonne and Arles, suggesting that the inhabitants of these Gallic cities could be included in the circle of his intended contemporary audience.¹⁸ Finding early evidence for Prudentius’ Spanish audience independent of his own works is problematical, but the entry from the Gallic Chronicle discussed in Chapter One above establishes that his poetry was seen by non-Spaniards as rooted in his background in Hispania. There is also strong evidence for Prudentius’ popularity in Southern Gaul from the later fifth century. Gennadius (of Marseilles) included him in his catalogue of notable men, his *de viris inlustribus*, and Sidonius Apollinaris listed the poet amongst the books read by a late Roman Gallic aristocrat.¹⁹

Charlet has suggested that a community of Christians may have gathered prayerfully around Prudentius at the poet’s own property, or as “*chrétiens cultivés*” may have privately meditated on the poet’s works.²⁰ In the fourth century many of the elites of Hispania and Southwestern Gaul, riding on the back of new prosperity, had built or extended rural homes, often constructing monumental villas which

¹⁵ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 370, line 2). It is possible that Valerianus was bishop of Zaragoza, however, Prudentius’ reference to the bishop’s celebration of the festivals of the Spanish saints Chelidonius and Eulalia seems to confirm a Spanish episcopacy (CCSL 126: 377-8, lines 237-8).

¹⁶ Ossius of Córdoba, Potamius of Lisbon and Pacianus of Barcelona were known to be aristocrats with Imperial connections, but other Hispanic bishops may have come from humbler backgrounds.

¹⁷ *Pe. IV* (CCSL 126: 287-289, lines 23, 30, 33, 96-100, 41-44, 19, 37, 45).

¹⁸ *Pe. IV* (CCSL 126: 287, lines 34-6); See Chapter 1, 24.

¹⁹ Gennadius, *de viris inlustribus*, 66, no. 13; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Poems and Letters*. In his letter to Donidius, Sidonius names the works of Augustine, Varro, Horace and Prudentius as being in the library of the villa where he was a guest, Book II, 451, 9.4.

²⁰ J-L. Charlet, *La création poétique dans le Cathemerinon de Prudence* (Société d’Édition “Les Belles Lettres”: Paris, 1982), 87.

displayed their wealth and signalled their status.²¹ Although usually conventionally built around a peristyle space, with their newly-popularised apsidal reception rooms, fountains, marble columns, painted plaster and often elaborate geometric and figurative mosaics, these villas were designed to impress the visiting guest and client.²² Despite other Roman provinces during this century witnessing similarly designed expansionist villa-building programmes, that of Hispania seems to have stood out as being exceptional, with a concentration of monumental villas on the Ebro and Duero valleys and in present-day Extramadura.²³ Therefore, rather than confining Prudentius to the more limited role proposed by Charlet, I suggest that, although perhaps not a professional poet, he would have circulated around these villas, setting himself up as an authoritative, authorial, figure, speaking in poetic terms on the intricacies of the Christian belief system as he saw them. Villa-poet thus seems an apt title for the more public persona Prudentius must have adopted as one who was “part and parcel” of the “status apparatus” of these great houses.²⁴ In his role as a villa-poet Prudentius must have hoped that his powerful rhetoric would impress and inspire others to follow, as he had done, the path to Christ. By using form and content which owed much to classical precedents he could bring Christianity to an elite audience, many of whom had probably been educated, as he had been, in the traditional schools of grammar and rhetoric.²⁵ The audience would respond to the references in his poetry redolent of a mutual cultural and educational background. Ammianus Marcellinus complained that Roman society of the early 370’sAD hated learning, but avidly enjoyed the popular light reading provided by

²¹ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, for a catalogue of many of these villas; Chavarría Arnau, in ‘Villas in Hispania during the fourth and fifth Centuries’ in Bowes and Kulikowski, *Hispania*, suggests that the largest of the villas lay in interior of the Iberian peninsula, while due to topography, *fundi* of more modest dimensions were in the littoral hinterland, 522-527; C. Balmelle, *Les demeures aristocratique d’Aquitaine. Société et culture de l’antiquité tardive dans le Sud-Ouest de la Gaule* (Bordeaux, Paris: de Boccard, 2001), contains a similar catalogue of the villas of Aquitaine.

²² Chavarría Arnau, ‘Villas in Hispania’, 527-39; Balmelle, *Les demeures*, chapters 3 and 4, on the design and decoration of Aquitanian villas.

²³ Chavarría Arnau, ‘Villas in Hispania’, 519, and 519, n.2, which lists the most substantial in those locations, and also 520, Fig. 1; C. Sfameni, ‘Residential Villas in Late Antique Italy: Continuity and Change’, in W. Bowden, L.Lavan and C.Machado (eds.), *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 335-375, especially 346.

²⁴ I quote Bowes, in *Private Worship*, 179-180, who refers to the so-called “villa-poets” like Prudentius, Ausonius and Sidonius Apollinaris as writing in the shadow of the great villas of Hispania and Southwestern Gaul.

²⁵ Succinctly summarised by R. Kaster on ‘Education’ in G. Bowersock, P.Brown, O.Grabar (eds.), *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 421-3; also R. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1997), especially 20-31; R. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 220-244, especially 221 and 243-4.

Juvenal and Marius Maximus.²⁶ If this was true of Roman Hispania and Southern Gaul, it might explain why Prudentius' Christian poetry was replete with blood-drenched imagery and sexual innuendo. His verses could thus satisfy the intellectual demands of educated aristocrats, while also providing entertainment for them (and for the less-cultivated). Prudentius, however, also intended his verses to function as a means of converting the unconverted to Christ and strengthening the half-hearted believers among this audience.

If, as suggested in Chapter One, Prudentius had held senior posts within the Imperial bureaucracy, or had possibly been a provincial governor, he would have had ready-made contacts among the rich and powerful in Hispania and would have had to be a member of a network of influential personages in order to progress with any degree of success through the governmental ranks.²⁷ It is possible, therefore, that he mixed with the highest-level officers in Hispania. The vicar and the governors who administered the province each ran extensive offices. (Arce suggests that there were up to 300 in the *officium* of the vicar).²⁸ These together with the *curiales* who still ran the towns of Hispania formed a substantial body of civil servants of various ranks. Although, as discussed in Chapter One, we cannot accurately determine Prudentius' own place in the Imperial hierarchy, we can, however, propose that members of the government of Hispania may have formed part of his intended audience.

In addition to the higher-level members of this bureaucratic class Prudentius' poetry might also have appealed to educated members of the military. In particular the blood-thirsty battles between the personifications of good and evil described in the *Psychomachia* might engage the interest of a man of action, as could the heroic tale of the martyrdom of the soldiers Emeterius and Chelidonius at Calagurris. As stated earlier Calagurris was on the route to the headquarters of the *Legio VII Gemina* at Legio (Leon). There were also, according to the *Notitia Dignitatum*, five

²⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus (ed. and tr.) J. Rolfe (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935-9), 3 vols. Vol.3, 145, 28.4.14.

²⁷ See Chapter 1, 21-22, with reference to Prudentius' career.

²⁸ J.Arce, *El último siglo de la España romana (284-409)* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1997). See 59 for a chart of the proposed civil administration of late Roman Hispania, following the *Notitia Dignitatum*.

cohorts of troops stationed across the most northerly fringe of the peninsula.²⁹ Our Vareian ornament, if military in character, suggests the presence of high-ranking officers close to the poet's home.

It is therefore reasonable to suggest that there was a potential elite audience in Hispania and Southern Gaul for Prudentius' work beyond his immediate environment at Calagurris. I do not, however, consider that one should look for a received audience among the alleged group of Spanish Christians situated with Theodosius at his court in Constantinople, although Prudentius may have intended that they have access to his verses.³⁰ There is no evidence for Prudentius or his writings being located in the Eastern Empire at the time. I do not ignore the possible dissemination of Prudentius' poetry among members of the Western Imperial courts in Milan and Ravenna, since we know from his own writing that he visited Italy, probably in the early years of the fifth century. Although Prudentius had connections within the political network, and would later clearly mark his admiration for Theodosius I for his positive pro-Christian policies, it is, however, probably safest also to discount a proposed scenario which has the future emperor meeting and encouraging the ambitious young Prudentius, when he was living on his estates in Hispania between 376 and 378AD.³¹

Theodosius is, nevertheless, one of the few late fourth-century Christian aristocrats whom we can identify by name as possessing property in Hispania. According to Hydatius his home was in the civitas of Cauca (modern Coca). Cauca lay on a tributary of the Duero and was well-placed for access on the Roman Imperial itineraries. According to his panegyricist, Pacatus, Theodosius "played the farmer", whilst in Spain, finding tasks to occupy him, in order not to "succumb to torpor and lassitude", and to rid himself of "the rust of insidious leisure", the *otium*

²⁹ Arce, *El último siglo*, 65-6, 70, (for map). These were as follows: cohors II Flavia Pacatiana at Paetaonium, cohors Lucensis at Lucus (Lugo), cohors Celtiberiae at Iuliobriga, cohors I Gallica at Velleia (Iruna) and cohors II Gallica at an unidentified station.

³⁰ See Chapter 1, 31-33 for further information on this group.

³¹ Theorised by Palmer, *Prudentius*, 26. There is no evidence for this meeting and as will be noted re Pacatus (n.32, below), Theodosius does not seem to have been politically active during this period; Prudentius celebrated the banning of pagan worship by Theodosius in *CS. I* (CCSL 126:182, lines 9-21).

which characterised the ideal lifestyle of many of the elite of Hispania.³² Although, on becoming emperor, Theodosius left his estates at Cauca behind for Constantinople, it seems that there were still aristocratic members of his family remaining in Hispania, and very wealthy ones at that. In 408AD, two brothers, Didymus and Verinianus (together with their cousins Teodosiolus and Lagodus), related to the then Western emperor Honorius, had sufficient resources to gather together an army of slaves from their own estates. They were able to support these from their private income in order to mount a campaign against the armies of the usurper Constantine in an attempt to protect their homeland.³³ Therefore Prudentius may not have written for the Theodosian court in Constantinople, but the emperor's relatives left in Hispania may have formed part of his intended audience. Unfortunately the elite of Hispania, not many of whom would have possessed the kind of wealth or notoriety possessed by Didymus and his family, are poorly represented in the written record.³⁴ Scholars have previously tended to neglect them because of this lack of textual evidence. John Matthew's comment that we lack knowledge of the Spaniards at home, compared to those who went abroad, still holds true.³⁵ However, although this elite of Hispania are generally unnamed in the textual record - as we shall see - the material record can give us greater information about this group.

On occasions we can identify the *domini* and *dominae* who occupied the villas of Hispania. Some have left mementos of their presence in the shape of inscriptions which form part of the mosaics which decorated their homes. There was an important connection between the owner and the well-being of his or her villa. This can be seen at Els Ametllers at Tossa de Mar. Here a mosaic of a standing figure of the *dominus*, Vitalis, or possibly an allegorized personification of the place, welcomes the visitor, accompanied by the message, *salve Vitale/ felix Turissa*.³⁶ At

³² *Pacatus: Panegyric*, 24, 9.4; J.Arce, ' "Otium et Negotium" :The Great Estates, 4th to 7th Century' in L.Webster and M.Brown, *The Transformation of the Roman World, AD 400-900* (London: British Museum, 1997), 19-32.

³³ Orosius, Bk. 7, 40 (CSEL 5: 550-1, lines 5-7).

³⁴ We can name Lucinius and Theodora, the ascetic Christian correspondents of Jerome, *Ep.* 71, (CSEL 55:1-7.) and 75 (CSEL 55:29-34.), and also the various correspondents of Symmachus, see n.80.

³⁵ Matthews, *Western Aristocracies*, 147. See 29-30 above.

³⁶ Illustration 5, Appendix B; J.Nolla, L.Palahi, R.Sureda, *Els Ametllers, oci i negoci al camp en època romana* (Girona: Universitat de Girona, 2009), 52-7. In this case 'felix' can perhaps also be translated as fertile as well as happy.

Torres Novas, similarly, *viventes/ Cardilius/ et Avitam/ felix Turre* appears alongside what seem to be portrait busts of the proprietors, Cardilius and Avita.³⁷ The villa of Torre de Bell-Lloc, near Girona, more minimally, contains the message *Cecilianus ficet* as well as a mosaic of the circus, highlighting one of the important predilections of the aristocratic classes.³⁸ The name Maternus appears in a mosaic in a *cubiculum* at the monumental villa of Carranque, near Toledo.³⁹ The legend *utere felix Materne/hunc cubiculum* is inscribed among some of the finest figural mosaics of fourth-century Hispania. However, Maternus was a very common name in Central Hispania, and therefore, the suggestion, not evidenced, by the excavators that Carranque was the burial place of Theodosius' Eastern Praetorian Prefect, the Spaniard, Maternus Cynegius, must remain unproven.⁴⁰ Returning to the Ebro valley, although situated on a tributary some way southeast of Calagurris, the eponymous (?) villa of Fortunatus may display the owner's mark in an inscription in a mosaic. The name Fortunatus is bisected with a chi-rho and represents a rare indication of possible Christian engagement by a fourth-century Hispanic villa-owner.⁴¹ Nearer to Calagurris, only thirty kilometres down the Ebro, lies the villa of El Ramalete. Here, within a decorative octagonal late fourth-century mosaic, Dulcitius has commissioned a portrayal of himself as the ideal aristocrat riding out to hunt.⁴² His name is inscribed around his head, as with arm raised he is shown at the moment of spearing a deer. Although not found at a specific villa, at a short distance from Calagurris, near Alfaro, another member of the local elite can be identified. The name Ursicinus, surrounding a bust of the dead man, was found as part of an elaborate mosaic on a tomb. The tomb-cover also contains the chi-rho symbol, implying that Ursicinus was a practising Christian.⁴³ We, therefore, have only a few

³⁷ A. Do Paco, 'Mosaicos romanos de la villa de Cardilius en Torres Novas (Portugal)' *AEspA* 37 (1964), 81-7, Fig. 9, 10. The portraits are accompanied by a picture of an amphora, emphasizing the beneficent presence of the owners.

³⁸ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, dates this to the fourth-century monumentalizing of the villa, 172; J-G. Gorges, *Les villas hispano-romaines: inventaire et problématique archéologiques* (Paris: Diffusion E. De Bocard, 1979), prefers a less likely third-century date, 255.

³⁹ D. Fernández Galiano, (ed.), *Carranque: centro de hispania romana, Alcalá de Henares 27 de Abril a 23 de Septiembre 2001*, (Alcalá de Henares: Museo Arqueológico Regional, 2001), 85-6.

⁴⁰ Fernández Galiano, *Carranque*, 80.

⁴¹ Illustration 6, Appendix B; P. de Palol, R. Navarro, 'Villa Fortunatus' in P. de Palol, A. Pladevall, (eds.) *Del romà al romànic* (Barcelona: Fundació Enciclopèdia Catalana, 1999), 146-9. See 69-70 below for my questioning of the Christianity of 'Fortunatus'.

⁴² J-M. Blázquez, M. Mezquíriz, *Mosaicos romanos de Navarra*, CME.VII (Madrid: Instituto Español de Arqueología de CSIC, 1985), 63-9, pl. 39-40.

⁴³ Espinosa, *Calagurris*, 200; J-M. Blázquez, G. López Monteagudo, M. San Nicolás Pedras (eds.), *Mosaicos romanos del Museo Arqueológico Nacional*, CME IX (Madrid: CSIC, Centro de Estudios

epigraphic fragments which enable us to identify, by name, specific members of a Hispanic villa elite of the kind who might have constituted Prudentius' audience.

Nevertheless, although we cannot put a name to their owners, other fourth-century villas, such as those at Arellano, Liedena, Cabriana, Villafranca and Falces, have been discovered not far from Calagurris.⁴⁴ Chavarría Arnau has suggested that there were variations in the evolution of fourth and fifth-century villas in Hispania. Monumental villas and large estates were concentrated in the peninsula's interior and along the main rivers, while *fundi* of medium and small dimensions were found in coastal areas with frequent fourth-century conversions of living spaces into productive areas.⁴⁵ However, while grand villas like Arellano and Liedena fit the model proposed by Chavarría Arnau, the villa at Falces, across the river from Calagurris, may have been of a smaller, simpler type. The earlier villa was reconstructed during the fourth century and had machinery for the production of wine installed at that time.⁴⁶ This villa should remind us that, as suggested in Chapter One, Prudentius, himself, also may have occupied a more modest dwelling in the area. Nevertheless, it is tempting to see in Dulcitius and Ursicinus and their successors, and the unnamed occupants of the neighbouring villas, both great and lesser, the most immediate audience for the villa-poet. Gathering together they might have been entertained and uplifted, by Prudentius' verses while perhaps enjoying a "*poculum*" of the local wine.⁴⁷ Similarities can be seen between Prudentius' way of life and that of the Gallic aristocrat and poet, Ausonius, who took pleasure in his fertile "*parvum herediolum*" in Southern Gaul, and the company of friends, and was also part of a Christian community.⁴⁸ I have thus suggested in this section a broad group of the elite, unfortunately mainly anonymous, who might have formed an

Históricos, 1989), 32, n.12. Stylistically this shows North-African influence and the probable transmission of Christian ideas of funerary decoration from across the Mediterranean.

⁴⁴ Espinosa, *Calagurris*, 203-6; M. Mezquíriz Irujo, 'Hallazgo de mosaicos romanos en Villafranca (Navarra)', in *Trabajos de Arqueología Navarra, Homenaje a Maria Angeles Mezquíriz* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2004), 361-83. The mosaics are the only remains left of the villa.

⁴⁵ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 157. See also above, n.21.

⁴⁶ M. Mezquíriz, 'La villa romana de San Estebán de Falces (Navarra)' in *Trabajos de Arqueología Navarra, Homenaje a Maria Angeles Mezquíriz* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2004), 221-45; M. Mezquíriz, 'La producción de vino en época romana a través de los hallazgos en territorio Navarro,' in *Trabajos de Arqueología Navarra, Homenaje a Maria Angeles Mezquíriz* (2004), 141-3; Espinosa, *Calagurris*, 205.

⁴⁷ *Cath. II* (CCSL 126:7-8, lines 29-30). Here Prudentius regrets the occasional wine-fuelled excess.

⁴⁸ Ausonius, *Opera*, I *Praefationes variae*, VI, *De Herediolo*, on his "little patrimony", 21, and *Ephemeris*, 2, II, III, on daily prayer, 8-11, and V on social life, 12; Bowes in *Private Worship* also includes Ausonius within the category of villa-poet, as well as Paulinus and Sidonius Apollinaris, 180.

audience for Prudentius' work, and will now consider the cultural and social links which existed between them.

III. *Paideia* in Hispania: A Socio-cultural Network.

Prudentius' poetry was written to catch the attention of a literate and cultivated audience. He wrote using poetic structures and metres familiar to them from the texts of the great authors like Vergil and Horace. We have evidence that this was significant to his readers from the earliest extant manuscript of his work, albeit possessed in Italy about one hundred and twenty years after Prudentius' death. The Roman owner (purportedly Mavortius whose signature on the manuscript is in the same handwriting) has identified the metre Prudentius used and has written the details in the margin beside each poem.⁴⁹ Prudentius used references to classical culture and mythology in his work which he would expect his audience to recognise and understand. He would have expected most of his audience to have been educated in the same way that he had been in Latin grammar (language and literature) and rhetoric. They would have had a shared culture and undoubtedly some common interests. This *paideia* bound together the privileged and powerful of Hispania in a cultural homogeneity, in a way which did not depend on their religious beliefs or practices. In spite of this it was still important for individuals within this elite socio-cultural network to distinguish themselves from their fellows. Not only did members of the older senatorial aristocracy employ strategies to show superiority one from the other, but the fourth century brought social challenges from new members of the expanded Imperial bureaucracy who sought to show that they could match the old elite in their lifestyles. The physical remains of the villas of the elite can give us clues as to what it meant to be part of this socio-cultural network. These buildings show us how the Roman aristocrat wished to present himself to the world.

The villa property of La Olmeda at Pedrosa de la Vega in Palencia exemplifies many aspects, although at the highest level, of how this aristocratic group functioned. La Olmeda was one of the grandest of the villas built in the fourth century. It was conventionally constructed with rooms surrounding a peristyle courtyard, but at each corner of the central structure were four substantial towers,

⁴⁹ Personal observation of the 'Puteanus' manuscript BN 8084 shows that, for example, beside *Cathemerinon* hymn VI, the owner has written 'Hymnus ante somnum metrum iambicum dimetrum catalectum'.

two square and two octagonal.⁵⁰ This imposing building built on flatlands must have visibly signalled the power of its owner to the non-elite who enabled his lifestyle and to other members of what has been described as a competitive aristocracy.⁵¹ La Olmeda is notable for having close to it two large Late Antique necropoleis. One, *la necrópolis Norte*, contained 111 burials and ceased functioning sometime in the later fourth century. The other, *la necrópolis Sur*, contained 526 graves and was dated slightly later, continuing possibly into the sixth century.⁵² These tombs contained, as grave goods, items such as spearheads, knives, TSHT (Terra Sigillata Hispánica Tardía) pottery, agricultural tools, jewellery and implements used for spinning.⁵³ These finds give an indication of the way that the *dominus* controlled a large mixed group of people on his estate; workers to produce the crops, to manage the animals and to manufacture their end-products, which provided the sources of his prosperity, as well as men who would come to his aid in the event of protection being needed for his world.⁵⁴ A number of archaeological sites, dating to the fourth or fifth centuries have also been found within a radius of ten kilometres of the La Olmeda villa, the remains of which indicate that there were dependent relationships between these satellite settlements and the main residential building.⁵⁵

Chavarría Arnau suggests that physical evidence from La Olmeda demonstrates that its owner had a high-ranking role in the Imperial administration. This evidence consists of *cingula militiae* and also two contorniates, bronze medallions decorated with images of Nero and Theodosius, which were found in the villa.⁵⁶ The function of the latter is not definite, but they seem to be linked to spectacles at the amphitheatre or the circus. The proposition that themes on the reverse of contorniates were of “pagan character” has been countered by the assertion that these

⁵⁰ P.de Palol, *La Villa romana de la Olmeda de Pedrosa de la Vega (Palencia): guía de excavaciones* (Palencia: Ediciones de la Exma. Diputación Provincial de Palencia, 1990), 16-24.

⁵¹ Bowes, *Private Worship*, 180-1. However, although Bowes’ proposes that Christian projects contributed to this competitive social and cultural environment, it is not at all clear from the physical evidence that in the late fourth and early fifth centuries this was the case. See below, 67-71.

⁵² J-A. Abásolo, J.Cortes, F. Pérez Rodríguez-Aragón, *La necrópolis Norte de la Olmeda, (Pedrosa de la Vega, Palencia)* (Diputación Provincial de Palencia, 1997), 143-5.

⁵³ Abásolo et al., *La necrópolis Norte*. The Northern cemetery grave goods are catalogued on 9-126; Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 118-120, fig.21, 218.

⁵⁴ In the same way as Didymus and his family had formed an army from their estate workers, see 47 above.

⁵⁵ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 218.

⁵⁶ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 48-9, Figs.3c and 4; Palol, *La Olmeda*. A number of bronzes thought to be associated with horses and their riders were also found including what is described as a phalera. This, although damaged, bears some resemblance to the Vareian ornament, being a bronze silver-plated head of lion, 48.

medallions constituted a “secular genre”.⁵⁷ These opposing views emphasize the difficulties of assessing any kind of ‘religious’ nature for much material culture of the fourth century, as exemplified by the ‘Medusa’ image on the Vareian medallion.⁵⁸ The implication of the discovery of the contorniates is, however, that the resident of La Olmeda served as a patron of events like the games. Social obligations like this were still a way of interacting with fellow members of the elite and of showing prestige in the fourth century. La Olmeda showed another sign of the interaction between this group and of the social standing of its owner. The villa possessed one of the largest and most architecturally ornate baths in Hispania. As most of the elite spent much of their time on their estates the kind of social and political networking which had been carried on assiduously at the urban public baths may now have been performed at the rural villas.⁵⁹ The bath complex contained two giant multi-sided rooms, one tri-apsidal and another with four smaller apses, one of which has been interpreted as being a grand reception area where the owner would have greeted his guests.⁶⁰ These activities are further evidence of the villa-owners’ desire to impress and be seen as leaders of society.

The mosaics which covered the floors of many of the rooms of the elite villas were a means by which the owner could display a cultured ‘classical’ background. These often depicted the stories from the mythology which formed such an integral part of the literary heritage of the educated Hispano-Roman. Particularly in the case of the less socially-confident *dominus*, the mosaicist may sometimes have influenced the choice of such schemes, and have provided useful information as to the cultural pretensions and artistic preferences of fellow villa-dwellers.⁶¹

At La Olmeda the principal reception room contains a spectacular mosaic, divided into two pictures, which encapsulates the way in which the *possessor* of the villa

⁵⁷ See Cameron, *The Lost Pagans*, for discussion at 691-8, particularly 697. Cameron regards images depicted on contorniates as randomly selected from Greek and Roman history and literature, without the specific religious connotations (as suggested by Alföldi). Nevertheless the continuing pagan religious associations of the games at the close of the fourth century should not be disregarded in this context.

⁵⁸ See above 40-41.

⁵⁹ L. Revell, *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 179 on baths as a marker of social identity.

⁶⁰ V. García-Entero, ‘Los *Balnea* de las *villae* Tardoantiguas en *Hispania*’, *Anejos de AEspA* (2006), 97-111, at 103, 107, and Fig. 5. Other monumental bath complexes existed at Milreu (10 rooms) and Pago de Tejada (11 rooms).

⁶¹ See chapter 5, 182, n. 68 and 69 for further discussion on the use of pattern books by mosaicists.

wished to be perceived by visitors to his home.⁶² The mosaic's enormous size - over one hundred and seventy square metres - and the superior quality of its workmanship and artistry would have immediately given proof of the wealth and taste of the owner. His education and position in society would then be revealed to the viewer by the subject-matter. The first of the two images depicts a tableau in which Achilles is discovered on Skyros among the women of Lykomedes by Ulysses - an episode recorded by the poet Statius.⁶³ The second is a scene showing hunters, some mounted, some on foot, pursuing wild animals, including lions, tigers, leopards and deer.⁶⁴ The various episodes of the hunt - each man fighting an individual animal, or each animal attacking one another - are conflated into one scene. Both of these pictures give proof of the interconnectedness of the culture of the Roman elite in Spain and indeed across the Empire. Achilles was a popular figure in domestic mosaics since he symbolised the *virtus* which could by transference be associated with the *dominus*. The choice of a scene of a hunt shows evidence of the importance of this status-defining activity. It was one of the most common themes to be found in Hispania and elsewhere in the Empire. The La Olmeda hunt mosaic is of special interest since stylistically it bears a strong resemblance in structure and content to a number of mosaics of the same period found in Africa, Sicily and Syria.⁶⁵ Although the means by which these similar designs were transmitted is open to question, it provides further proof of cultural links beyond Hispania. The reception room mosaic also contains a border with busts of the seasons at each corner and decorated with realistic portraits of what is assumed to be the family of the *dominus*.⁶⁶ The latter are interspersed among amphoras and vegetal motifs and fantastic images of ducks with dolphin tails. The mythological scene, depicting Achilles, was a way for the *dominus* to show an ostensible classical learning, genuine or not, to his visitors - his apparent knowledge enabled him to compete culturally not only with his peer group in Hispania but with others of his rank and education throughout Roman society.

⁶² Illustration 3, Appendix B; Palol, *La Olmeda*, 24-39; K. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 152-4, figs. 161, 162.

⁶³ Illustration 2, Appendix B.

⁶⁴ Illustration 4, Appendix B.

⁶⁵ K. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*. For example: Althiburus, Africa Proconsularis, 113, 114, figs. 115, 116; Piazza Armerina, 140, fig. 143 and Tellaro, 142, fig. 147 in Sicily; Apamea, Syria, 183, fig. 196. Dunbabin also notes purely ornamental mosaics in the villa which show motifs which have parallels in North Africa, 153.

⁶⁶ J. Arce, 'Musivaria y simbolismo en las villas tardorromanas' in Fernández Ochoa et al., *Las villae tardorromanas*, 85-97, suggests the choice of Achilles among the women as a theme was a quirky comment on the number of females in the owner's family as shown by the busts, 95.

Whilst the surrounding mosaic border, in an exuberant fashion, pulls together in one glorious status-determining statement the *dominus* and his family, their links with ancient classical tradition, their aristocratic activities and representations of the riches of their fertile estate. We can imagine Prudentius presenting his works, if not at La Olmeda villa itself, in surroundings similar to these.

La Olmeda may exemplify the apogee of late Roman villa-building and its attendant culture, but there were other residences, in both town and country, where the owners set out to artistically demonstrate their apparent classical learning. The more modest villa of Quintanilla de la Cuerza, which lay less than twenty kilometres from La Olmeda - its owners may have been part of the elite who would have assembled at the larger villa - contained fourth-century mosaics of Leda and the Swan and Neptune.⁶⁷ The villa of Carranque must have come close to La Olmeda in its splendour and monumentality, and contained fine mosaic depictions including the love triangle of Adonis, Mars and Venus and a Homeric scene of Achilles, again, with Briseis.⁶⁸ At other less spectacular homes owners also displayed their cultural leanings by decorating them with representations of myths. The villa of Torre de Bell-Lloc contained a mosaic of Bellerophon and the Chimera;⁶⁹ Almanara de Adaja had a fine mosaic of the toilette of Pegasus;⁷⁰ Cardenajimeno contained one of Meleager and Atalanta;⁷¹ in the urban area of Complutum there was a depiction of Leda with Jupiter as a swan;⁷² while the crudely-drawn mosaic, dated to the mid-fifth century, at Santisteban del Puerto portraying Achilles on Skyros shows us that the same classical image depicted so expertly at La Olmeda continued to be used as an overt symbol of culture, even when the skills to construct it had perhaps been lost.⁷³ Most of the villa-owners may also, of course, have been attracted to the beauty of the images of these mythological figures depicted in mosaics and also in sculpture, in

⁶⁷ M. García Guinea, (ed.) *La villa romana de Quintanilla de la Cueva (Palencia): Memoria de las excavaciones 1970-1981* (Palencia: Diputación de Palencia, 2000), 264, 300, 301.

⁶⁸ Fernández Galiano, *Carranque*, 87-90.

⁶⁹ M. Guardia Pons, 'Mosaics de la vil.la de Bell-Lloc', in Palol, Pladevall, *Del romà*, 154-6.

⁷⁰ M. Neira, T. Manañes, *Mosaicos romanos de Valladolid*, CME XI (Madrid: CSIC, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1998), 29-34, Pl.59.

⁷¹ G. López Monteagudo, R. Navarro Sáez, P.de Palol, *Mosaicos romanos de Burgos*, CME XII (Madrid: CSIC, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1998), 21-8, Pls. 35-42.

⁷² Illustration 7, Appendix B; D. Fernández Galiano, *Complutum: II, Mosaicos*, (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1984), 206-213.

⁷³ J. Blázquez, *Mosaicos romanos de Córdoba, Jaén y Málaga*, CME III (Madrid: Instituto Español de Arqueología "Rodrigo Caro" de CSIC, 1981), 66-72, 91.

addition to the social prestige they might bring.⁷⁴ The tales of the gods brought scenes of romance, action and fantasy to embellish their homes.⁷⁵ Villa mosaics could also show particular aspects of elite communal culture which appealed to individual owners. Mosaics of the hunt have already been mentioned, but patronage of the games and the Hispanic love of horses were also celebrated pictorially. This also reminds us that the idea of a vital social and cultural life in Hispanic cities remained important to the villa-dwelling elite: an enormous fourth-century mosaic of a circus race decorated a *domus* in Barcelona, while in Mérida two mosaics showing victorious *aurigae* and their teams were discovered in the Calle Mazona.⁷⁶

A more obvious sign of the literary and intellectual pretensions of the elite villa-owner is illustrated by the use of images of the Muses to decorate rooms. One of the finest of these was at Arellano, not far from Calagurris. Here an octagonal mosaic contained nine segments depicting each of the Muses accompanied by a literary figure of note.⁷⁷ Amongst the extant images are those of Calliope and Homer, Clio and Caduceus, Talia and Menander, Euterpe and Hyagnis, and Urania with Aratus. One of the obligations of the follower of *paideia* was, to quote Libanius, to be “a servant of the Muses”.⁷⁸ The villa-dwelling elite of Arellano can be seen as wishing to be associated with literature and the arts and thus, one could reasonably suppose, may have been enthusiastic supporters of the poetry of their neighbour, Prudentius.

Appreciating a Classical past was not the only literate pursuit of the educated elite. They themselves participated in constructing a specifically late Roman literate culture by exchanging letters within the network of friends and relatives which made up their social group. This was an Empire-wide phenomenon – a means by which a common culture was held together. Unfortunately there is the usual dearth of textual

⁷⁴ I. Uytterhoeven, ‘Manifestations of “Classical Culture” in Late Antique Houses’ in P. Van Nuffelen (ed.), *Faces of Hellenism: Studies in the History of the Eastern Mediterranean (4th Century B. C. – 5th Century A.D.)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 321–43, on the use of dwellings, particularly in late antiquity, as a means to demonstrate the social position of the aristocrat, and the role played in this by classical art.

⁷⁵ See Chapter 5 and Appendix A, and also the fascicles of the Corpus de Mosaicos de España (CME) for further examples of mythological mosaics in Hispania.

⁷⁶ J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, *From Barcino to Barcinona, (1st to 7th centuries)* (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2002), 38; J. Gómez Pallerès, ‘Inscripciones musivas en la Antigüedad Tardía España’, *AEspA* 66 (1993), 284–294, 292–293, fig.7. These are possibly inscribed with the owners of the horses’ names.

⁷⁷ Blázquez, Mezquíriz, *Navarra*, CME VII, 15–22, pl.50.

⁷⁸ As quoted from Libanius, *Ep.* 1261.2 by Peter Brown in *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992) at 38, with reference to the ideal of a cultivated governor.

evidence in Hispania for this activity. Nor do we have any extant evidence for Prudentius' involvement in it. We do have the inspirational letters of Jerome to the Christians, Lucinius and his wife Theodora, which praise them in their ascetic vocation.⁷⁹ There are also the many letters of the Roman aristocrat, Symmachus, on the more traditional old-school topic of acquiring fine quality Spanish horses for his son's games in Rome. This pagan grandee wrote obsessively on this subject to correspondents who apparently lived in Hispania, such as Euphrasius and Pompeia, and to others like Longinianus, who possessed estates there.⁸⁰ Prudentius wrote two poems condemning the pagan beliefs of the same Symmachus, but whether, in a reversal of this epistolary traffic, his work was communicated to the aristocracy of Rome is debatable.⁸¹

Although we have no record of how Prudentius' writing was disseminated, it could well have been through this epistolary social network. It is not a Spaniard but a Gallic nobleman, Pontius Meropius Paulinus, who best shows how this system worked.⁸² He lived in Hispania with his Spanish wife, Therasia, for a time, and from there and subsequently from his bishopric at Nola, wrote copious letters which took poetic form to like-minded friends. From Spain he apparently corresponded with Jerome, but many of his letters were to his Christian friend Sulpicius Severus at his ascetic community in Southern Gaul, and to his old professor and Imperial bureaucrat Ausonius of Bordeaux. There appear to have been easy cross-Pyrenean contacts in existence, as Paulinus recommends Severus to visit him since it takes only eight days to travel between Hispania and Southern Gaul.⁸³ We have no record of Prudentius being part of what Fontaine describes as this "*géographie culturelle*"

⁷⁹ Jerome, *Epistulae*, Ep. 71, Licinius, (CSEL 55: 4, lines 3-5.), and Ep. 75, Theodora, (CSEL 55: 31, lines 13-14).

⁸⁰ Symmachus, MGH 6, Ep. IV. 119, 60; Ep. IX. 240, 18; Ep. VII. 203, 97; J Arce, *España entre el mundo antiguo y el mundo medieval* (Madrid: Taurus, 1988) on 'los caballos de Simmaco' and his correspondents; Estates such as these were exemplified by the third/fourth-century El Val villa where faunal remains of horses and a mosaic of an auriga show the importance of horse-breeding to this site. S. Rascón, 'La villa romana de El Val (Alcalá de Henares)', JRA, 8 (1995), 308-9.

⁸¹ CS. I and II. I regard these works as anti-pagan polemics which used the 'altar of victory' conflict between Symmachus and Ambrose as a convenient platform from which to present Prudentius' views to a primarily Hispanic and Gallic audience.

⁸² P.G. Walsh, *The Letters of Paulinus of Nola*, (Westminster, Md.: Newmann Press, 1966-7). Pages 1-14 analyse the recipients of Paulinus' correspondence; see page 43 above for Prudentius' potential Gallic connection.

⁸³ Paulinus of Nola, *Epistulae*, Ep. I, 11 (CSEL 29: 9-10).

in the Pyrenean region.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, similarities between the poetry of Prudentius and Ausonius have led to the proposition that Prudentius was familiar with the older man's work, especially the *Ephemeris* and the *Moselle* poems, and therefore the supposition that there might have been communication between them.⁸⁵

The correspondence of Paulinus and Ausonius seems to add to our knowledge of the landscape of late fourth-century Hispania and the cultural ties between Hispania and Southern Gaul. Ausonius wrote to Paulinus in Hispania, as his aristocratic friend had failed to reply to earlier letters, with rather over-the-top concerns that his Paulinus was trapped in an uncivilised and barren wilderness: "Therefore, shall Birbilis or Calagurris, clinging to the cliffs, or arid Ilerda [Lerida] whose ruins, scattered over rugged mountains, looking down on the rushing [river] Sicoris, possess him who is my and his country's pride and the crown of the senate?"⁸⁶ Paulinus replied that there was more to Hispania than towns like these:

...but why am I accused on this charge, when I live in and have lived in different places near to proud cities also renowned for the fertile agriculture of their people?...Are Birbilis, Calagurris and Lerida the only places marked out [in Hispania] which has Zaragoza, pleasant Barcelona, and Tarraco looking down on the sea from an impressive height? Why need I enumerate cities which are excellent in their lands and dwellings which prosperous Hispania extends into two seas?⁸⁷

Paulinus, elsewhere in his poem, unfortunately for us, failed to defend Birbilis (Calatayud), Calagurris (which, of course, was probably Prudentius' home town), and Lerida. He reiterates the flaws of their ill-favoured positions as proposed by Ausonius, although in this he may be merely matching the same rhetorical hyperbole

⁸⁴ J.Fontaine, 'Société et culture chrétiennes sur l'aire circumpyrénéenne au siècle de Théodose', *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique*, 4 (1974), 241-282, at 280.

⁸⁵ Charlet, *L'Influence d'Ausone*, 1 -14.

⁸⁶ Ausonius, *Opera*, Ep.27, 251, 56-59. "Ergo meum patriaeque decus columnque senati Birbilis aut haerens scopulis Calagurris habebit aut quae deictis iuga per scruposa ruinis arida torrentem Sicorim despectat Ilerda?"

⁸⁷ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, 10, (CSEL 30: 33-4, lines 215-7 and 231-5): "...Sed mihi cur sit ab illo nomine crimen, qui diversa colo, ut colui, loca iuncta superbis urbibus et laetis hominum celeberrima cultis?...Birbilis huic tantum, Calagurris, Hilerda notantur, Caesarea est Augusta cui, Barcinus amoena et capite insigni despectans Tarraco pontum? Quid numerum egregias terris et moenibus urbes, quas geminum felix Hispania tendit in aequor".

used by his former professor.⁸⁸ Prudentius' own poetry, however, gives us a different view of the countryside around the poet's home: it is a place where corn, vines, olives and leguminous crops flourish, where there are orchards red and ripe with fruit, where cattle provide milk and curds and where thyme-scented honey abounds.⁸⁹

Recent archaeological discoveries show that Prudentius' description of the fertility of the Hispanic countryside was not just the product of his similarly fertile imagination. Returning to Theodosius' home in the countryside around Cauca, one of the villas near to the town, Almenara de Adaja, provides evidence of the kind of agricultural activities which might have occupied estate-owners, such as the future Emperor. Faunal remains found near the villa, including cattle, sheep, goat and horse, seem to reflect a stock-rearing economy, while those of deer, wolf and wild boar remind us again of the hunting activities of the leisured classes.⁹⁰ The villa La Torrecilla, also lying in the Meseta, has been thoroughly subjected to an archaeological examination of its faunal remains, which have (unusually) been published in detail. Large numbers of bones of cattle, horses, sheep, goats, pigs, rabbits and hares, as well as fish, have been discovered at the site. Further indications of the diet of the occupiers are shown by a quantity of partridge and chicken bones which suggest the production of eggs as a nutritional supplement.⁹¹ At another superior excavation site, Vilauba, near the north-eastern coast, paleobotanical analysis has shown evidence of the cultivation of the cereal crops which provided the basic nourishment of the population. These crops were mainly wheat, but also barley and oats. Legumes like beans and peas were also grown and there was evidence for livestock and wine and olive oil production.⁹² In fact, the finds at Vilauba give us archaeological proof of the kind of villa agriculture described above by Prudentius in his *Cathemerinon* poem.

⁸⁸ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, 10 (CSEL 30:34, lines 223-4); Ausonius, *Opera*, 5, *Commemoratio Professorum*. Ausonius' exaggerated criticism of Lerida contrasts with his praise for this town which had once given a safe home to his friend Dynamius, one of the *Professores* of Bordeaux, no. 23, 64-65.

⁸⁹ *Cath. III* (CCSL 126: 12-3, lines 51-80). Although providing a list of the agricultural wealth around him, Prudentius rejected the consumption of meat at lines 58-62. This has led to suggestions that he belonged to an ascetic community, even though his enjoyment of wine seems to militate against this proposition.

⁹⁰ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 224.

⁹¹ C. Blasco Bosqued, R. Lucas Pellicer, *El yacimiento romano de La Torrecilla: de Villa a Tugurium* (Madrid: Departamento de Prehistoria y Arqueología, Servicio de Publicaciones, UAM, 2000), 'Los Restos de Fauna', 181-231.

⁹² P.Castanyer, J. Tremoleda, 'La Villa de Vilauba. De la Antigüedad Tardía hasta el abandono final', *Anejos de AEspA*, 39 (2006), 133-151, at 146-8.

The literary and material evidence, therefore, seems to indicate that the Hispania of Prudentius' elite audience was, in terms of social, cultural and economic circumstances, on the whole in good health. Nevertheless, there do seem to have been changes in commercial activity during the fourth century, with Hispanic internal trade and production predominating over long-distance exchange.⁹³ As Reynolds has recently demonstrated, although there is evidence of some limited trade with the Eastern Empire, external trading contacts in the later fourth and early fifth century were focused mainly on Southern Gaul and Africa - areas which also had literary, artistic and religious intercourse with Hispania.⁹⁴ Jerome's declaration in 379AD, albeit by one who had never visited Hispania, that it was a poor province and its inhabitants half-starved, seems surprising, since evidence for the province's prosperity, as suggested above, does not appear to support this position.⁹⁵ Jerome's comment seems likely to have applied to the poverty of the spiritual well-being of the Spanish rather than to their physical health, and leads us - finally - to the vexed question of the extent to which Prudentius' audience in Hispania followed 'correct' Christian precepts, or for that matter to what extent they were adherents of the Christian way of life at all.

IV. Christianity and Villa-based Communities

The 'Medusa' head on the *phalera* found at Vareia is no more proof than the mythological mosaics in the villas that non-Christian or even anti-Christian religious beliefs and practices were a vital part of life in Hispania in the late fourth and early fifth century. However, it does flag up the need to consider the extent to which both aristocrats and the non-elite of the Iberian peninsula were entirely committed to the

⁹³ For example see P. Reynolds, 'Hispania in the Late Roman Mediterranean,' in Bowes and Kulikowski, *Hispania*, on the extensive use of locally produced TSHT pottery, 404-8. He also notes that Spanish wine was produced mainly for local and regional consumption in the fourth century at 437.

⁹⁴ See Reynolds, *Hispania and the Roman Mediterranean*. For example, Baetican oil exports in the fourth and early fifth century seem now to be mainly to Southern Gaul, rather than to Northern military sites and Rome, as previously, as well as internally to Tarraconensis, 144-6. Gallic fine wares were imported and widely marketed in North-eastern Hispania in the same period, 58-9 and Table 12; See Reynolds in Bowes and Kulikowski, *Hispania*, on the dominant use of African Red Slip Ware in southern and eastern Hispania, 401. However, see 391 regarding exports of Spanish fish products to the East (and also Chapter 5, 187-188 below for imports of Eastern artworks into Hispania) which show that trade did continue, albeit in a limited fashion, between Hispania and the East.

⁹⁵ Jerome, *Opera*, III, *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi*, 15 (CCSL 79B: 39, lines 546-9). "Nimirum Adversarius potens concessit Christo Hiberam excetram: luridos homines et inopem provinciam dedignatus est possidere". Jerome's commentary concerned the followers of the heretical bishop Lucifer.

Christian way of life, in rigorous terms set out by Prudentius himself, even though they might have described themselves as Christians. Alan Cameron has recently argued:

For those brought up in the world of civic cults and private initiations, it cannot have been easy to comprehend the exclusive absolute commitment Christianity demanded. During much of the fourth century, there must have been many who took a genuine interest in Christianity and presented or considered themselves Christians but, while rejecting sacrifice to what they were willing to accept were false gods, still followed (say) pagan burial customs, continued to watch a favorite festival, or occasionally consulted a haruspex.⁹⁶

Evidence from this period in Hispania does not support a picture of a people who conformed exclusively to the new official religion of the Empire, or were necessarily willing to follow the orthodox doctrines instituted by the church hierarchy.

Prudentius was conscious of the difficulties which faced the hierarchy of the Institutional Church in dealing with the residue of, what he considered to be, pagan worshippers in Hispania and the potential for recidivism and deviation from orthodoxy amongst those who were ostensibly Christian. In the *Praefatio* to his works he expresses his intentions to use his poetry to tackle issues of heretical and unorthodox ideologies, promoting the spread of Catholic Christianity and attacking pagan belief and the worship of idols.⁹⁷ The Emperor Theodosius had been responsible for banning sacrifices and access to temples and pagan shrines in 391AD, and as discussed in Chapter One, his Court in Constantinople has been seen as a centre of orthodox Christian belief.⁹⁸ However, just how strong the pious Christian influence felt by the Theodosian Court was in Prudentian Hispania has proved hard to assess, particularly in its rural areas. While there is evidence for organized urban Christian activity, the picture outside of the towns is less certain. For example, on the one hand there are those who see positive signs of Christian

⁹⁶ A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans*, 175.

⁹⁷ *Praef.* (CCSL 126: 2, lines 39-41): “pugnet contra hereses, catholicam discutiat fidem, conculcet sacra gentium, labem, Roma, tuis inferat idolis”.

⁹⁸ *C.Th.* 16.10.10 (given at Milan, Feb.24, 391AD); Chapter 1, 29-32.

rituals from ‘churches’ in or attached to rural villas in the fourth century.⁹⁹ On the other, the lack of physical evidence for monumental Christian building projects outside of major towns is seen as pointing to a lack of Christian infrastructure in rural areas until the late fifth or early sixth centuries.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, as I shall argue below, Prudentius’ concerns regarding the continuing worship of pagan idols, manifested many times over in his verses, alongside his corresponding determination to inspire Christian dedication in a lacklustre audience, seem to be justified by physical and literary evidence.

The northern part of Hispania where Prudentius was located seems, in particular, to have been less open to the authority of the institutional Church. In c.305AD the Council of Elvira, held in the south of the peninsula, and our best source for the early structure and dogma of the church in Hispania, was attended by nineteen bishops of which the majority came from Baetica, Lusitania and Carthaginiensis. Only two bishops at the Elvira council seem certainly to have come from northern Hispania: Valerius of Zaragoza and Decentius of Legio in Gallaecia.¹⁰¹ Even by the mid-fifth century bishops in Hispania were still few and far between, with Baetica remaining the exception, although many of these seem to have been in small towns and thus follow a pattern more akin to that of North Africa.¹⁰² Prudentius placed himself beside the “*Vasco Hiberus*” - the Vasconian river Ebro - amongst the people known as the Vascones who occupied a swathe of land approximating to the present-day Basque country.¹⁰³ This was an area which was noted in Christian literature for a stubborn attachment to non-Christian religious rites, associated with both the Roman pantheon of gods and indigenous beliefs. Prudentius showed his awareness of the reputation of the Vascones in his hymn to Emeterius and Chelidonius, in which he

⁹⁹ Bowes, ‘ “une coterie espagnole” ’, 208-34; Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 250-5.

¹⁰⁰ Chavarría Arnau, ‘Churches and aristocracies’ at 164; See also below 68-73.

¹⁰¹ Vives, *Concilios*, ‘Concilio de Elvira’, 1. (According to Vives, 24 presbyters also attended the Council, but his claim that presbyter Eucharius Municipio came from Calagurris seems to be spurious); A third northern bishop, Januarius of Fib(u)laria, may have come from the Huesca region in Tarraconensis. See the map of possible bishoprics in J. Vilella Masana, ‘Las Iglesias y las cristianidades Hispanas: panorama prosopográfico’ in R. Teja (ed.), *La Hispania del siglo IV. Administración, economía, sociedad, cristianización* (Bari: Edipuglia, 2002), 117-159, at 152; in “une coterie espagnole” ’, Bowes suggests that the southern bishops at the Council probably numbered fourteen, 235, n.97.

¹⁰² Bowes, ‘ “une coterie espagnole” ’, 235-7; See the map in Vilella, *La Hispania*, 152. Since some the evidence on this map is taken from the Council of Elvira, it is open to question as to whether even the small southern bishoprics had survived to the fifth century; L. Dossey, *Peasant and Empire in North Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), Ch. 5, especially 125-30.

¹⁰³ *Pe. II* (CCSL 126: 275,537).

exhorted his audience to believe in the power of the holy blood of these saints. He impatiently goaded his readers and listeners to Christian belief, and vilified them as “*bruta quondam Vasconum gentilitas*”.¹⁰⁴ These are Vascones who are sometimes stupid pagans. The repeated protreptic nature of the poet’s works may imply a continuing lack of Christian commitment on the part of these people.

Paulinus also highlighted the heathenish reputation of the Vascon people. In his above-mentioned letter from Hispania to Ausonius he admitted that there were many places where the inhabitants were uncultivated and ignorant of the law, but in their defence “what area was without rustic rituals”?¹⁰⁵ After all, he tells Ausonius: “if someone lives in a Vasconian forest but leads a life untainted by sin, he takes on no contagion of patterns of behaviour from a barbarous host”.¹⁰⁶ Paulinus notes that there is no danger of this happening to him personally as he is living in a prosperous location elsewhere.¹⁰⁷ But he then continues: “and even if my life had been in the region of Vasconia, why should not the uncivilised inhabitants rather become moulded to my customs, leaving their barbarous practices to change to ours”?¹⁰⁸ In other words, Paulinus claims that if he had lived in Vasconia, the inhabitants might be converted to his own ‘civilized’ way of life – a way of life, of course, that included devout Christian practices.

Paulinus seems to have been rather unrealistically optimistic in his hopes for a cessation of local customary practices in the region of Vasconia. Around 572AD Bishop Martin of Braga in Gallaecia was still complaining about ‘rustics’ who were bound by old pagan superstitions and who were venerating demons instead of the Christian God.¹⁰⁹ These rituals, which so bothered the Church hierarchy, seem to have taken various forms. Martin referred specifically to the offering of sacrifices to

¹⁰⁴ *Pe.I* (CCSL 126: 255,94-5); J. Sayas Abengoechea, ‘Algunas consideraciones sobre la cristianización de los vascones’, *Príncipe de Viana*, 46 (1985), 35-56, at 44, suggests that Prudentius uses the word “gentilitas” rather than ‘paganitas’ to specifically target the community around Calagurris. He also notes the use of the word ‘bruta’ to describe non-Christians by church fathers such as the fourth-century priest Ambrosiaster, (Rom.10, 19).

¹⁰⁵ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, 10 (CSEL 30:33, lines 199-201): “Sint multa locorum, multa hominum studiis inculta, expertia legum, quae regio agresti ritu caret?”

¹⁰⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, 10 (CSEL 30: 33, 212-5); “Sic Vascone saltu quisquis agit purus sceleris vitam integer aequus, nulla ab inhumano morum contagia ducit hospite”.

¹⁰⁷ See 57, n.87 above.

¹⁰⁸ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, 10 (CSEL 30: 34, lines 218-20): “Ac si Vasconicis mihi vita fuisset in oris, cur non more meo potius formata ferinos poneret, in nostros migrans, gens Barbara ritus?”

¹⁰⁹ Martin of Braga, ‘De Correctione Rusticorum’ (tr.) C. Barlow in *Iberian Fathers, Vol 1* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1969), Ch. 1, 71.

gods in streams, fountains, woodland and sea, the lighting of candles beside rocks, trees, fountains and at crossroads, and the holding of rituals on Vulcan's day.¹¹⁰ Even in the apparently more Christianised environs of Barcelona, Bishop Pacianus, writing in the latter half of the fourth century, had to contend with a festival described as the fawn (*cervulus*) which probably involved the participants donning the skins of deer to perform some inappropriate, to the bishop at least, festive rites.¹¹¹ In a treatise, unfortunately no longer extant, Pacianus condemned this custom, but subsequently regretted that this censure had had the opposite effect and the ritual was now practised even more enthusiastically.¹¹²

There is evidence for the continued Late Roman production of vessels which might have been used in cult activities. Part of a mould from the TSHT pottery manufacturing site of Sobrevilla, which lay on a tributary of the Ebro not far to the west of Calagurris, and therefore in Prudentius' backyard, shows an image identified as Diana alongside a hare and a partridge.¹¹³ This has been given a date possibly as late as the fifth century, and shows, if not the persistence of rituals involving the goddess, at least the personal possession of objects, like the 'Medusa' ornament, associated with non-Christian religion.

In the more immediate vicinity of Prudentius' Calagurris there is physical evidence that there were non-Christian cultic activities being practised which may well have caused this Christian poet concern. These would appear to have involved rituals associated with bulls and seem to have continued throughout the fourth century at least. So-called '*aras taurobolicas*' have been found in a crescent of land lying to the north-east of the town. They consist of crudely drawn images of bull's heads carved on rectangular blocks of sandstone. Ten of these, dated between the end of

¹¹⁰ Martin, 'De correctione', 8 and 16, 74-5, 81-2; The pre-Roman cult of protective roadside spirits (*lares viales*) was particularly strong in the north-west of Hispania, J. Blázquez, *Religiones PreRomanas, II: primitivas religiones ibéricas* (Madrid: Editiones Cristiandad, 1983), 301-3.

¹¹¹ Pacianus, *De Paenitentibus*, I.3 (CCSL 69B: 10); S. McKenna, *Paganism and Pagan Survivals in Spain up to the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom* (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1938) 47; R. Arbesmann, 'The 'cervuli' and 'anniculae' in Caesarius of Arles', *Traditio*, 35 (1979), 89-117. Several sermons of the early 6th century Bishop Caesarius also condemned the sacrilegious rite of dressing as a stag, presumed to be a continuing pre-Roman cult, during New Year festivities.

¹¹² Pacianus, *De Paenitentibus* I.3 (CCSL 69B: 10); Jerome also refers to Pacianus writing a work called the 'Cervus', *De viris illustribus*, Bernoulli, 50, no. 106.

¹¹³ M. Pascual Mayoral, P. Rioja Rubio, P. García Ruiz, 'El centro alfarero de Sobrevilla. Badarán. La Rioja', *Antigüedad y Cristianismo*, 17 (2000), 291-312, at 297-303, 312. Although not named, Sobrevilla seems to have been part of a group of TSHT potteries in the region identified in Reynolds, *Hispania and the Roman Empire*, 60-63, see above, 41.

the third and the beginning of the fifth centuries, were found in Zaragoza province at Farasdues, Sofuentes, Sos del Rey Católico, and Uncastillo, and five in Navarra - two near the villa of Arellano, another at Esclava and two more at Ujue.¹¹⁴ Vidal Álvarez sees the altars as being from a small sculptural workshop dedicated to the manufacture of these pieces for an exclusively local clientele, and inevitably it is thought that they must be associated with some manner of taurobolic rite.¹¹⁵ This seems to be confirmed by images on one of the altars at Sos del Rey Católico which show a human figure holding a ritual jar, standing to the left of the bull's head, while beneath it there is an altar with a sacrificial knife on it. Another altar located at Ujue contains an inscription devoted to the indigenous god, Lacubegis, which suggests that the rituals attached to them were not necessarily associated with gods which were part of the Roman pantheon.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, the excavator of the late fourth-century villa of Arellano, Mezquíriz Irujo, has linked the two altars found in what appears to be a two-roomed shrine located near the villa to the cult of Magna Mater/Cybele and Attis. The fact that the villa was decorated with mosaics believed to depict these figures and the association of their cult with bull sacrifice has given weight to this conclusion.¹¹⁷ Although there is some evidence for metroac cults in Hispania, the attribution to the villa of Arellano is by no means certain. It must thus remain unclear what deities or spirits were being worshipped at the '*aras taurobolicas*' and what form this worship might have taken.

The difficulty of determining the ritual purpose of the altars is compounded by Prudentius' own graphic description of a taurobolic rite in his *Peristephanon* poem on the bloody martyrdom of Romanus.¹¹⁸ The poet relates in detail the acts carried out as part of the ritual of killing the bull. The creature was placed on a wooden platform, pierced with holes, which had been laid above a deep pit. As its breast was cut open, blood poured from the beast through the holes onto a priest standing in the pit below, bathing him in a gory stream. The priest then emerged from below and

¹¹⁴ S. Vidal Álvarez, *La Escultura Hispánica figurada de la Antigüedad tardía (siglos IV-VII)*, CSIR (España), Vol. 2 (Murcia La Asociación de Arqueología Clásica Tabularium, 2005), 14-15, 17-19; Illustration 8 and 9 (Ujue), Appendix B.

¹¹⁵ Vidal Álvarez, *La Escultura Hispánica*, 17.

¹¹⁶ M. Mezquíriz Irujo, *Museo de Navarra* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1989), 45. The altar is inscribed 'coeli tesphoros et festa et telesinus lacubegi ex voto'; Illustrations 8 and 9, Appendix B.

¹¹⁷ M. Mezquíriz Irujo, *La villa romana de Arellano* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, Departamento de Cultura y Turismo, 2004), 161-169.

¹¹⁸ *Pe. X* (CCSL 126: 365-6, lines 1011-50).

displayed his blood-stained robe and body to the acclamation of the waiting audience. This description has been taken by some, such as Mezquíriz Irujo, to be an authentic record of a taurobolic rite, and by others, such as Kim Bowes and Neil McLynn, to be a fantasy, almost wholly fabricated.¹¹⁹ In spite of his doubts, McLynn acknowledged that Prudentius' version of the ritual tied in with other allusions to possible similar taurobolia, which describe pagans "showered with blood", and "devotees sent beneath the earth, stained with the blood of a bull".¹²⁰ However, the significance for the student of Prudentius lies not in the accuracy or not of his portrayal of the ritual, but that he chose to intrude it at all into the story of Romanus, a Christian martyr. *Peristephanon X* was essentially a vehicle for a polemic against pagan religion woven into the narrative recording the martyrdom of the saint.¹²¹ As the account of the taurobolium is an excursus barely connected to the verses which precede it, was it included as an attack on indigenous rites involving bull sacrifice or worship which persisted in the locality of Calagurris? While accepting that Prudentius may have created a typically blood-stained over-the-top image in his verses, it would not be surprising if he chose to condemn a taurobolic rite in his poem as a way of showing his anger about the rituals attached to the bulls' head altars which still continued to thrive close to home.

Apart from the altars at Arellano physical evidence for non-Christian shrines connected with villas, including nymphaea, is slim. A two-roomed shrine to Mars was placed adjacent to the fourth-century villa at Torre de Palma, but appears to be

¹¹⁹ Mezquíriz Irujo, *Arellano*, 167-8. Page 167 is illustrated by an imagined drawing of the rite; K.Bowes, 'Building Sacred Landscapes: Villas and Cult', *Anejos de AEspA*, 39 (2006), 73-95, at 79, n.23; N.McLynn, 'The Fourth-Century Taurobolium', *Phoenix*, 50 (1996), 3-4, 312-330, especially, 318-320; M.Beard, J.North, S.Price, *Religions of Rome*, 2 vols.: Vol.2, *A Sourcebook*, 160-2, 6.7a. The authors suggests that Prudentius' account emphasizes the polluting blood of the taurobolium to contrast with the pure blood of Christ and the martyr Romanus, but, nevertheless, accept some degree of accuracy in Prudentius' description.

¹²⁰ McLynn, 'Taurobolium', referencing descriptions of taurobolic rites in the work of Firmicus Maternus and the anonymous 'Carmen Contra Paganos', 314; Cameron, *The Last Pagans*, Appendix, 803, quotes 'Carmen Contra Paganos' lines 57 and 60-1 - "taurobolus....sub terram missus, pollutus sanguine tauri, sordidus infectus". Prudentius uses the same phrase "sub terram" in *Pe. X* (CCSL 126:365, line 1011). Coincidentally(?) a copy of this poem is bound with Prudentius' works in the 6th century Puteanus edition of his poems; see also N. McLynn, 'Pagans in a Roman Empire', in P. Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (Malden, Ma.; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), at 576, on the elite Roman taste for sacrifice.

¹²¹ Bergman *Prudentii*, 'Prolegomena', XIII. The seventh-century MSS of Prudentius' works entitles *Pe.X* 'Sancti Romani Martyris Contra Gentiles Dicta'.

second century in date.¹²² A later fourth-century apsed structure at Odrinhas has been identified as a ‘temple’, although this is impossible to prove conclusively nor is it entirely clear what temple might mean in a villa-context.¹²³ A collection of similar fourth-century structures, apsed and with porticoed ambulatories have been found in western Hispania (Milreu, Quinto do Marim and São Cucufate) and have also been identified as ‘temples’.¹²⁴ Finally, at Carranque a small temple/shrine or nyphaeum from the mid-late fourth century was found, although as Fernández-Galiano suggests it is more likely that nymphaea at villas had a utilitarian or ornamental function rather than a religious one.¹²⁵ A point of interest, however, regarding all of these sites is their location close to the main villa entrance, which may suggest an intimate relationship between any ‘cultic’ activities and the *dominus*.¹²⁶ This proximity underscores the importance of the relationship between the proprietor and the welfare of his property which was manifested in the mosaics of Vitalis and Cardilius and Avita mentioned earlier. While it might seem that the kind of primitive rituals practised by the rustics, which Prudentius and Paulinus so frowned upon, had no connection to the elite, there was a common need in both groups to protect the fertility of the land. It is possible that the episcopal participants at the Council of Elvira had this in mind when they ruled that anyone destroying an idol, who was subsequently killed, would not be regarded as a martyr – any Christian landowner foolhardy enough to destroy a pagan spiritual protector had to be aware of the potential consequences.¹²⁷ There is, therefore, evidence, both literary and physical, which suggests that villa-based communities in the fourth and early fifth centuries continued to exist in a ‘pagan’, non-Christian, rural environment.

¹²² S. Maloney, ‘The Early Christian Basilican Complex of Torre de Palma (Monforte, Alto Alentejo, Portugal) in *IV Reunió d’Arqueologia Cristiana Hispànica* (Barcelona: Institut d’Estudis Catalans, 1995), 449-458, 452.

¹²³ Bowes, ‘Building Sacred Landscapes’, 77. Bowes uses the word ‘temple’ although in a villa-context shrine might be a more appropriate nomenclature.

¹²⁴ Bowes, ‘Building Sacred Landscapes’, 77; Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 104-5, Fig. 18.

¹²⁵ Fernández-Galiano, *Carranque*, 97 – on other villa nymphaea in Hispania, 95-8; see D. Vaquerizo Gil, J. Carrillo Diaz-Pines, ‘The Roman Villa of El Ruedo (Almedinilla, Córdoba)’, *JRA*, 8 (1995), 121-54. Here it is proposed that a fourth-century nymphaeum was part of an iconographic programme, using mythological sculptures, evoking a “paradise” of nature where “otium” could be enjoyed by the elite in private, 129-44.

¹²⁶ Bowes, ‘Building Sacred Landscapes’, 80.

¹²⁷ Vives, *Concilios*, ‘Concilio de Elvira’ 12, canon 60; D. Riggs, ‘The Continuity of Paganism between the Cities and Countryside of Late Roman Africa’, in T. Burns, J. Eadie (eds.), *Urban Centers and Rural Contexts in Late Antiquity* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 285-300, on a similar situation in Africa in the early fifth century. There, “landowners were resistant to cracking down on pagan worship on their estates”, and “may have been hesitant to reject those deities who had so faithfully safeguarded their agricultural investments for generations”, 295.

Although the evidence for ‘pagan’ structures continuing to be built is limited, there is also little indication that Christian edifices were being constructed in rural Hispania during a similar time-frame, that is, before the demise of Prudentius. Buildings identified as Christian seem more likely to have had a funerary function, although it is not always clear that this was the religious orientation of those buried there. This is perhaps not surprising, since the church did not require any particular ritual for a Christian burial in the fourth and fifth century, with funeral formalities being left to the family who often continued with traditional practices.¹²⁸ Prudentius, in fact, in his prayer for the dead (*Cathemerinon* X) gives us clues as to rituals which were being followed among the elite:

The funeral procession distinguishes [the dead], it is the custom to spread over linen of brilliant whiteness, and sprinkled myrrh with its Sabaean drug preserves the body...we shall tend the covered bones with violets and plentiful leaves and sprinkle the epitaph and the cold stones with perfumed liquid.¹²⁹

Although it appears that prayers would have been said at the burial, these passages give little indication of specifically Christian rituals or the possibility of finding physical evidence, other than an inscription, which could reveal the religion of the deceased (albeit, of course, as recorded by the living).

The building at Las Vegas de Pueblanueva near to an unexcavated villa, seems a rare case of a mausoleum in Hispania which could clearly claim to be Christian. It was a large octagonal structure with a subterranean crypt containing three sarcophagi, one of which depicted Christ and the twelve apostles and was of Constantinopolitan workmanship.¹³⁰ La Alberca is another mausoleum located near a villa. With its apse and buttressed walls it has been described as a mid-fourth-century martyrium, based on similarities in structure to the martyrium of Saint Anastasias at Marusinac at Salona of that date, even though no material evidence has been found

¹²⁸ E. Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity* (tr.) E. Trapnell Rawlings, J. Routier-Pucci (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), xii.

¹²⁹ *Cath. X* (CCSL 126: 55, lines 48-52; 59, lines 169-172): “Funeris ambitus ornat candore nitentia claro praetendere lintea mos est, aspersaque myrrha Sabaeco corpus medicamine servat ...nos tecta fovebimus ossa violis et fronde frequenti titulumque et frigida saxa liquido spargemus odore”.

¹³⁰ P.de Palol, *Arqueología cristiana de la España romana, siglos iv-vi* (Madrid: CSIC, Institut Enrique Flóres, 1967), 315-6, representing an example of Eastern influence coming West.

to confirm this supposition.¹³¹ A mid-fourth-century mausoleum, cruciform and double-apsed, was located near the villa of Sádaba, not far from Calagurris.¹³² A late fourth or early fifth-century east-west oriented building containing a marble sarcophagus at the villa of La Cocosa was converted into a church much later, and, thus, is considered to be Christian.¹³³ These sparse signs of possible rural Christian burial among the villa elite can be supplemented by evidence in the form of sarcophagi decorated with Christian imagery which have been found in locations distant from known Roman urban centres. Finds, for example, like those at Layos and Berja which were Constantinian in design, and Hellin (late fourth-century), do, nevertheless, have the disadvantage of having been excavated at a time when prior interest was in their artistic rather than their archaeological value, and so no relevant context was recorded to add information to their discovery.¹³⁴ In the simpler tombs at the rural necropoleis at La Olmeda, however, among the material finds there were none which indicated an attachment to the Christian faith or otherwise by either the interred or their mourners. The earlier Northern cemetery contained inhumations which were mixed between orientation east-west and north-south.¹³⁵ The later Southern cemetery was predominately east-west-facing in orientation, which could imply developing Christian belief in the mourners, but could also just show a change of custom unrelated to religious belief. Since this necropolis probably functioned through to the sixth century, some of the 'Christian' burials could have taken place later than the fourth or early fifth century. It is, nevertheless, possible that burial rituals similar to those described by Prudentius, which cannot be verified, may have been carried out there. However, funerary remains above and below ground fail to present a strong case for extensive Christian practices in rural Hispania in the fourth century.

It is equally difficult to see substantial evidence for early places of Christian worship located at villas. Structures seen as possible villa-churches at the fourth-century sites of Marialba, Las Vegas de Pedraza, Monte da Cegonha and Las Calaveras, as well as the 'temples' at Milreu and São Cucafate, were, in fact,

¹³¹ Palol, *Arqueología cristiana*, 106-116.

¹³² A. García y Bellido, 'La villa y el mausoleo romano de Sádaba', *AEspA* (1963), 166-70, 107-8.

¹³³ Palol, *Arqueología cristiana*, 139-145; Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 264, gives a 6th or 7th century date to the altar.

¹³⁴ Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos romanos*, no.59, no.71 (both found in the 17th century), and no.101 (18th century).

¹³⁵ Abásolo et al., *La necrópolis Norte*, 143, 145.

probably not converted to or remodelled as churches until the late fifth or sixth century or even later.¹³⁶ A fourth-century cruciform building next to El Val villa which contained fragments of a glass bowl illustrated possibly with biblical figures, appears much later to have become a basilica.¹³⁷

Doubts can be thrown on other structures seen as examples of fulfilling an early Christian function. The building at Centcelles which contains fine mosaics of Old and New Testament episodes on its walls was unlikely to have had a religious use.¹³⁸ It was probably the villa of an ambitious *dominus* who wished to show Christian affinity by creating a spectacular reception area decorated with Biblical scenes – the inclusion of his own portrait above that of the Good Shepherd seems to show the owner’s wish to be seen in a comparable protective role.¹³⁹ (Or else he was attracted to the Biblical stories for aesthetic or other reasons). At the villa called Fortunatus a chi-rho was found in a late fourth-century mosaic, bisecting the words ‘FORTU...NATUS’, which seemed to indicate a Christian owner.¹⁴⁰ However, it has been proposed that ‘FORTU...NATUS’ may have stood for the birth of fortune, since it appeared next to images signifying a fertile landscape.¹⁴¹ I suggest the possibility that the chi-rho was an apotropaic symbol, serving the same function as the swastika decorating a similar mosaic showing rural wealth at nearby Estada.¹⁴²

¹³⁶ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final* (Iglesias y villae), 142-152; K. Bowes, ‘“... Nec sedere in villam”. Villa-churches, Rural Piety, and the Priscillian Controversy’, in T. Burns, J. Eadie, *Urban Centers*, 323-348, includes as being possibly fourth-century a church at Montinho das Laranjeiras dated by Chavarría Arnau to the sixth century.

¹³⁷ S. Rascón Marques, A. Sánchez Montez, ‘Realidades cambiantes: *Complutum* tardoantiguo’, in *VI Reunió d’arqueologia cristiana hispànica* (Barcelona: Institut d’estudis Catalans, 2005), 499-517. The authors describe this find as the remains of a liturgical bowl dated to c.370AD, 503-7.

¹³⁸ The Jonah mosaic at Centcelles, Illustration 10, Appendix B, for example.

¹³⁹ Arce, *Centcelles. El monumento tardorromana*, contains essays which discuss this building’s function. It has also been suggested that it was the mausoleum of an aristocrat or emperor, (Schlunk named Constans, died 350AD, but without convincing evidence); I agree with Bowes in doubting this proposal, referencing Bowes, ‘“Une coterie espagnole”’, 215-8, and also Bowes, ‘Some thoughts on the living and the dead’ (Unpublished memorandum, n.d., personal communication). It seems unlikely that a monumental mausoleum would have been constructed within a villa which continued in occupation, and questions have arisen over the possible later dating of the ‘crypt’ beneath the villa floor and also the feasibility of its actual construction as a mausoleum space; see Chapter 5, 207-8 for further discussion of this site.

¹⁴⁰ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 146; Palol, Navarro, ‘Villa Fortunatus’, 146-7; Illustration 6, Appendix B.

¹⁴¹ Escribano, Fatás, *La antigüedad tardía en Aragón*, references this proposition by D. Fernández Galiano, 79. The presence of a statue of Attis suggesting a Magna Mater-Cybele cult further complicates the religious picture.

¹⁴² Cf. K. Bowes, ‘Christian images in the home’, *Antiquité Tardive*, 19 (2011), 171-190. At 174 Bowes states that there was a “blatantly Christian dominus” at Villa Fortunatus based on the chi-rho mosaic, but later at 178 refers to the protective use of symbols: “‘images’ most readily identifiable as

The Fortunatus villa was modified to contain a small crypt-like space which could have held a reliquary, and it has thus been seen as a cult centre. However, this may not only have not occurred until the later fifth or sixth century, but its conjectured Christian function may reflect its association with the earlier ‘Christian’ chi-rho symbol. The excavators of the villa at Torre de Palma have claimed that a long narrow double-apsed Christian basilica was built at that site in the mid-fourth-century. This assumption is based on coin finds dated between 335 and 357AD, although these could have been deposited later.¹⁴³ It has also been suggested that there is no evidence for this building at that time having a Christian function, and that the first church constructed at the villa was not until the sixth-century.¹⁴⁴

The function of the building described as ‘la más antigua basílica cristiana de Hispania’ at Carranque villa has probably proved to be the most contentious amongst these putative Christian buildings. The excavators hypothesised that this was originally built as the mausoleum of the Christian Praetorian Prefect, Maternus Cynegius, and dated it to the late fourth century, based on the fact that his body was returned to Hispania in 388AD and the name ‘Maternus’ is inscribed in a mosaic at the villa.¹⁴⁵ Finds of Christian symbols and liturgical articles at the site do not necessarily show an early Christian use for the building, as proposed by the excavators, since they were found in destruction layers and may well belong to later Christian use.¹⁴⁶ Arce’s revisionist proposal that the villa was actually a private bathhouse and the so-called basilica was the villa seems extreme, but it does emphasize the difficulty in identifying the function of the various buildings at villa sites, especially those possessing apses, which in the fourth century had become something of a common fashion statement.¹⁴⁷ The inconclusive evidence for an

protective are actually symbols – the cross, the chi-rho, or other older symbols such as ...the swastika”; Illustration 20, Appendix B (Estada).

¹⁴³ Maloney, ‘Christian Basilican Complex’, 457.

¹⁴⁴ Chavarría Arnau again suggests a sixth century date, *El Final*, 269, but prior to the coin finds later dates had been assigned to the building, Maloney, 457; M. Langley, ‘Invisible Converts: Non-visibility of Christian Culture at Torre de Palma’, in Fernández Ochoa et al, *Las villae tardorromanas*, 639-46. After examination of the collection of material from the site the author found it “lacking in any symbols, *grafito*, depictions or representations of Christian culture”, 643.

¹⁴⁵ Fernández Galiano, *Carranque*, 85-6.

¹⁴⁶ Bowes, ‘“Une coterie espagnole”’, 223.

¹⁴⁷ J.Arce, ‘La villa romana de Carranque (Toledo, España): identificación y propietario’, *Gerion*, 21.2 (2003), 17-30, at 22-3; E. Cerrillo Martin, ‘Cristianización y arqueología cristiana primitiva de la Lusitania: las areas rurales’ in *IV Reunió d’Arqueologia Cristiana Hispànica* (Barcelona: Institut d’Estudis Catalans, 1995), 359-75 - ‘Col-loqui’ at 374. Here N.Duval warns against the attribution of

association with the Christian religion at the above sites shows the difficulty in finding material signs that Prudentius was working in an irrefutably Christian environment.

These buildings at villa sites, seem, on the whole, to have been identified as Christian based on their structure rather on specific finds. Bowes states that nine Christian rural sites have been found dating from the fourth to the mid-fifth century, even though of these only Pueblanueva, Centcelles, and Fortunatus appear to have contained positive physical evidence of Christian association for the period - although as theorised above doubts can exist as to definite early Christian evidence at Fortunatus villa.¹⁴⁸ It is difficult to see in these evidence for “Hispania’s countryside” emerging “as a significant site of late antique religious activity vying with and surpassing that of the city” (particularly since some of them were funerary in function and therefore by no means certain to be Christian).¹⁴⁹ In fact the reverse seems to be nearer to the truth. Compared with the large number of known fourth-century villas in Hispania, the number of potentially Christian sites located in or near them looks strikingly low. Having compiled an extensive catalogue of fourth to seventh-century villas, Chavarría Arnau has concluded that Christian buildings in the Iberian peninsula were rare before the sixth century. Archaeology shows that churches built within late Roman villas were erected long after the abandonment of the residential buildings, with the first known rural churches in Hispania dating from c.500AD onwards.¹⁵⁰ (A similar state of affairs appears to have existed in Southern Gaul if Balmelle’s catalogue of Aquitanian villas is taken as an exemplar).¹⁵¹ It seems, therefore, that the case has been overstated for seeing fourth and early fifth-century rural Hispania as a landscape dotted with visible symbols of institutionalised Christianity.

apsidal spaces to “cultuel” roles, as they commonly appear elsewhere, such as in baths, dining rooms and entrance halls.

¹⁴⁸ Bowes, ‘ “une coterie espagnole” ’, 209. The nine are Marialba, Las Calaveras, Pueblanueva, Carranque, Las Vegas de Pedraza, Fortunatus, Centcelles, La Cocosa and La Alberca.

¹⁴⁹ Bowes, ‘ “une coterie espagnole” ’, 209.

¹⁵⁰ Chavarría Arnau, ‘Churches and aristocracies’, 164; see also J. Sales Carbonell, *Las construcciones cristianas de la Tarraconensis durante la Antigüedad Tardía* (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, (2012) for a recent catalogue of possible Late Antique Christian sites in Tarraconensis.

¹⁵¹ Balmelle, *Les demeures*, at 329 states that “rares” paleochristian installations only begin to appear in the Visigothic period. In her catalogue Balmelle refers to a fourth-century “église” (her quotation marks) at Valentine villa, n.64, and an “installation paléochrétienne” of an undetermined early date at Montreal, n.38 - neither of which seem to show definitive evidence of Christian activity in the fourth century.

In view of this probability, the likelihood is that, where they existed, most rural Christian communities in Hispania worshipped simply in their homes without the benefit of purpose-designed religious spaces. The poetry of Prudentius - in the form of the *Cathemerinon* prayers - which he wrote to be said at different times of the day and on particular occasions during the year, may have provided a means by which these communities could privately or together converse with God. Since bishoprics were thinly scattered over the Iberian peninsula, this was, probably, in many cases the only option for communal Christian worship.¹⁵² This dearth seems to imply that there was a lack of Christian enthusiasm among Spanish communities for new bishoprics, it being, to quote Dossey, “natural that a *populus* should want a bishop once sufficient numbers had become Christian”.¹⁵³

It seems that Prudentius had a local bishop, Valerianus, in Calagurris, although there is a possibility that his episcopal seat was further away in Zaragoza, which we know to have possessed a bishop since the early fourth century.¹⁵⁴ We do not, however, know the extent to which Spanish smaller towns and settlements, such as neighbouring Vareia or Gracchurris, would even have been ministered to by their own priest. There is evidence from the Council of Toledo of 400AD that the Church in Hispania acknowledged the fact that the reading of prayers took place in the local villas. Canon Nine states that the evening prayer said at the lighting of the lamps, the *lucernarium*, should be said in church but that it could be read in a villa if a bishop, presbyter or deacon was present.¹⁵⁵ (One assumes that the presence of the former in remote areas was probably unlikely). Prudentius, himself, had written a hymn for this very occasion, which although it could on occasion have been read in church, one can imagine being performed before a villa audience just as the sun was sinking and the lights were lit.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Bowes, ‘“une coterie espagnole”’, 235-7. Bishoprics in Hispania were scattered in the ratio of 1:15000 square kilometres, compared to Gaul which had a ratio of 1:7400 square kilometres; Vilella, ‘Las iglesias’, 152 for a map of bishoprics in Hispania.

¹⁵³ Dossey, in *Peasants*, at 133, was here referencing an African bishop who noted that “the people of God, multiplied by conversion, desired to have their own leader”.

¹⁵⁴ *Pe XI*, as noted previously, was directed to Valerianus (CCSL 126:370, line 2); Vives, *Concilios*, 1. The Council of Elvira, c.305AD, was attended by ‘Valerius episcopus Caesaragustanus’; However, we are certain that Calagurris possessed a bishop by 465AD, according to a letter of Pope Hilarius in which Silvanus of Calagurris is named - Espinosa and Noack-Haley, *Pieza*, 171, and n.7 (Hil. *Ep.* 16.1).

¹⁵⁵ Vives, *Concilios*, Council of Toledo 1, 22, VIII.

¹⁵⁶ *Cath. V* (CCSL 126:23-8) entitled “Hymnus ad incensum lucernae”.

Much of the Hispanic countryside was, then, seemingly distant from the direct influence of the institutional Church. Formal institutional Christian life seems to have been concentrated around the bishoprics located in the towns of Hispania. Thus Prudentius' poetry was a means by which Christianity could be brought to rural audiences not in regular contact with the senior levels of the Church hierarchy. Nevertheless, there is still very little concrete evidence of church-building in the larger towns before the mid-fifth century, particularly in intramural locations.¹⁵⁷ It is therefore probable that much communal urban Christian activity took place in the *domus*.¹⁵⁸ The evidence from paleo-Christian necropoleis, however, does show that urban activity had a longer and more overt tradition than is evidenced in rural areas, especially among competing social groups seeking to show their status and affinity with Christianity in their burial practices. This is shown by elaborate sarcophagi, often imported from Rome and Carthage and decorated with Christian symbolism, which have been found in fourth-century cemeteries in towns such as Tarragona, Barcelona, Mérida, Córdoba and Zaragoza.¹⁵⁹ Christian worship may have centred round these cemeteries, where early Christian martyrs had been buried. It is also possible that the rural elite had some involvement with urban religious activities and since there are few signs of wealthy burials in the countryside, some of the villa elite may well have been buried in the city cemeteries. Therefore a connection between Christians in rural and urban areas might be implied. However, the overall picture seems to indicate that institutional Christianity in cities and towns of Hispania has been overestimated.

Our focus in this chapter so far has been on Hispanic and Gallic villa-culture and its rural settings: the primary context for Prudentius' own writings. Prudentius,

¹⁵⁷Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*. See pages 216-240 on urban Christianity; see also n. 158 below re Barcelona.

¹⁵⁸C. Bonnet, J. Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, 'The origins and evolution of the episcopal buildings in *Barcino*: from early Christian times to the Visigothic era', in Beltrán (ed.), *From Barcino*, 74-7. For example, a grand *domus* discovered in Barcelona later developed into an episcopal complex, but not until the fifth century. The remains, however, of a fourth-century baptistery have been found at the site.

¹⁵⁹Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos Romanos*; Palol, *Arqueología cristiana*, 275-83; S. Keay, 'Tarraco in Late Antiquity' in N. Christie, S. Loseby (eds.), *Towns in Transition* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), 18-44, on the largest of the known Hispano-Roman Christian cemeteries, 31-33; See also Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, for more recent discoveries in Tarragona, 221-3, and Mérida, 233-8; I. Sánchez Ramos, *Corduba durante la Antigüedad tardía: Las necrópolis urbanas*, BAR Int. Series 2126 (2010); M. Galve, A Mostalac Carrillo, 'Las necrópolis', in Beltrán Lloris, *Zaragoza*, 85-96, on the sarcophagi in the Christian necropoleis of Zaragoza, which were the most significant in the upper Ebro valley, 92-6; Illustrations 11 and 12 (Zaragoza sarcophagi), Appendix B.

however, may have been familiar with certain urban Christian communities if one can judge from his list of martyrs worshipped in cities listed in *Peristephanon IV*.¹⁶⁰ As stated in Chapter One he could have been attached to the Imperial service in the Hispanic capital of Mérida or the provincial capital of Tarragona, and thus partaken of Christian life during his time there.¹⁶¹ Prudentius does describe a finely decorated shrine to Saint Eulalia in Mérida, although in the fourth-century the town seems only to have possessed a modest apsidal structure, possibly her mausoleum, with a basilica only constructed in the fifth-century.¹⁶² Similarly, in spite of Prudentius' reference to a marble shrine in Tarragona for Saint Fructuosus, there is no archaeological evidence for this building, or for a basilica in the city before the mid-fifth century, even though there is some literary evidence for a church, probably in one of the cemeteries, from correspondence of Augustine dating to around 420AD, as will be discussed further in Chapter Three.¹⁶³ The fact that Prudentius' poem on the martyr Hippolytus is dedicated to his local bishop Valerianus, of Calagurris or Zaragoza, seems to imply that Christian town or city-dwellers could have been part of his intended audience, although in spite of the evidence of the Christian burials in the necropoleis in the towns, it is not possible to gauge accurately the depth of belief of these urban Christian communities. Many may have been only nominally or superficially Christian in their ostensible beliefs, as is shown by indications that the urban church also had problems regarding non-Christian practices. In addition to the difficulties already mentioned which were faced by Pacianus of Barcelona, Himerius of Tarragona also confronted cases of apostasy: in a letter dated 384AD from Pope Siricius the bishop was advised on how to deal with Christians who had returned to the worship of idols.¹⁶⁴ As Prudentius was aware not all would-be urban Christians felt comfortable discarding old traditions such as the pagan *dis manibus* on their

¹⁶⁰ *Pe. IV* (CCSL 126: 286-7, lines 19-49).

¹⁶¹ *Pe. III* (CCSL 126: 285, lines 208-9) on Eulalia of Mérida. He refers to himself as being in the midst of a group in Mérida, bringing poems of praise to them. "Ast ego certa choro medio texta feram pede dactylico".

¹⁶² *Pe. III* (CCSL 126: 284, lines 184-200); Kulikowski, *Late Roman Cities*, 235-7; P. Mateos Cruz, M. Alba Calzado, 'De Emerita Augusta a Marida, *Anejos de AEspA* (2000), 143-168, at 148; See Chapter 3, 118-120 regarding this site.

¹⁶³ Augustine, *Sancti Aureli Augustini Opera, Epistolae ex duobus codicibus nuper in lucem prolatae* (ed.), J. Divjak, Ep. 11*(CSEL 88:57,8.3-4; 60, 12,4-6).

¹⁶⁴ Siricius, *Epistolae et Decreta, ad Himerium Episcopum Tarraconnensem*, Ep. I.3 (PL 13. 1136).

tombstones. In the Tarragona necropolis the old prayer to the gods can be seen carved beside an inscription of a chi-rho.¹⁶⁵

Moreover, even if a Spaniard seemed to be safely following the Christian way of life there was always the danger that he or she would become tainted by heresy. It often seemed that the Church hierarchy was more concerned with keeping its members on the Nicene straight and narrow, and away from what it saw as heretical beliefs, rather than with preventing their lapses into paganism. In his poem on the martyrdom of Hippolytus, Prudentius' concerns for his immediate Christian audience are revealed, with his hopes that his bishop Valerianus, will be able to protect them from heresy (as represented by the traditional symbol of a wolf): "So may your sheepfold be full and the wolf be shut out of it and your flock never reduced by him seizing a lamb".¹⁶⁶

Other poetic assaults on those whom Prudentius saw as failing to subscribe to orthodoxy match in their vitriol his verses condemning pagan belief. The villain of the piece in the *Psychomachia*, his allegory of good versus evil, is Discordia, whose other name is Heresy. In the final battle it is she who is defeated by Faith.¹⁶⁷ His *Apotheosis* poem, the main section of which is subtitled "*contra heresim quae patrem passum dicit*", contains more detailed attacks on heretical teachings, including Manichaeism and Sabellianism, which Prudentius believed had stained the catholic (orthodox) doctrine.¹⁶⁸ In the *Hamartigenia* verses he also attacked the doctrines of Marcionism, which by the fourth century was no longer a problematical issue, but it is likely that this heresy received his criticism because of its connection

¹⁶⁵ G. Alföldy, *Die Römischen Inschriften von Tarraco* (Berlin: W.de Gruyter, 1975), 439. Number 998 is the inscription of Valeria Pompeia, "D[is] M[anibus]. [chi-rho]. Requiescet santus spiretus in nomene dei"; The necropolis also seems to have still contained pagan worshippers according to the fourth-early fifth century inscription of Nepotianus and his mother, as referred to by Keay in 'Tarraco in Late Antiquity', at 33.

¹⁶⁶ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 378, lines 241-2): "sic tibi de pleno lupus excludatur ovili agna nec ulla tuum capta gregem minuat".

¹⁶⁷ *Psych.* (CCSL 126: 174-5, lines 683-725).

¹⁶⁸ *Apoth.* (CCSL 126: 77, line 2): "dogmata catholicam maculent male prodita linguam". The subtitle 'contra heresim' appears in the BN 8084 'Puteanus' edition of his works. Further sub-titled in the same edition of the *Apotheosis* are the various heresies Prudentius condemns: 'contra unionitas' (Sabellianism) (CCSL 126: 83-88, lines 178-320), 'adversum iudaeos' (CCSL 126: 88-96, lines 321-551), 'contra homuncionitas' (Ebionites) (CCSL 126: 96-104, lines 552-781), 'adversum fantasmaticos qui christum negant verum corpus habuisse' (Manicheans) (CCSL 126: 110-114, lines 952-1061); M. Miró Vinaixa, 'Paganos y herejes en la obra de Aurelio Prudencio. Estado de la cuestión', in Teja, Pérez, *La Hispania de Teodosio*, 179 -192.

with dualism and therefore this was a tacit reference to Manichaeism.¹⁶⁹ It is certainly possible that some of Prudentius' concerns about heresy were linked to the case in Hispania of Priscillian, who had been executed for alleged heretical practices associated with Manichaeism in 385AD.¹⁷⁰ As we shall see, it would have been difficult for the poet or his audience not to be aware of this notorious affair.

The Priscillian affair struck at the heart of the Institutional Church in Hispania. Its consequences reverberated among the Church hierarchy in Hispania and Aquitania and among the Christian laity in those regions for years after his death.¹⁷¹ Priscillian had been a charismatic figure from a noble family, who had been supposedly drawn to Gnostic doctrine brought from Egypt.¹⁷² He had drawn around him diverse followers, amongst them nobles, bishops, women and the non-elite, in an ascetic lifestyle, to the extent that his popularity alarmed and threatened members of the established church.¹⁷³ His ascetic teachings espoused the promotion of celibacy, voluntary poverty and the practising of teetotalism and vegetarianism.¹⁷⁴ However, Priscillian's greatest crime in the eyes of the Church hierarchy may well have been, not that he encouraged asceticism, which, following the ideals of Egyptian hermits had spread to Hispania from the east, but that he took his acolytes away from the control of the bishops in the cities.¹⁷⁵ The Council of Zaragoza assembled in 380AD to condemn the activities of Priscillian and his followers. Although he was not specifically named there, Priscillian's writings and those of the historian Sulpicius Severus clearly confirm the Council's antagonism to Priscillian.¹⁷⁶ Amongst its

¹⁶⁹ The Hamartigenia was a poem on the nature of evil, in which verses named Marcion as a proponent of the doctrine of dualism. *Praef. Ham.* (CCSL 126: 117, line 36); *Ham.* (CCSL 126: 118, line 1; 120, line 56; 122, lines 124, 129; 133, line 502).

¹⁷⁰ Sulpicius Severus, *Libri Qui Supersunt, Chroniconum*, (CSEL 1), Severus chronicled the Priscillian affair in the fifth century.

¹⁷¹ Church Councils in Zaragoza (380 AD) and Toledo (400AD) were held condemning Priscillian and his works, which were attended by bishops from Hispania and Aquitania.

¹⁷² Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* II, 46 (CSEL 1:99, 17).

¹⁷³ Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* II, 46 (CSEL 1:99, 30-32). Priscillian's followers were "multos nobilium pluresque populares auctoritate persuadendi et arte blandiendi allicuit in societatem. ad hoc mulieres novarum rerum cupidae..."; *Chron.* II 46 (CSEL 1: 100, c.46, 4-5). Bishops who supported him were Instantius and Salvianus.

¹⁷⁴ *Priscillian of Avila: The Complete Works*, (ed. and tr.) M.Conti, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). As genuine works Conti lists the Wurzburg Tractates, Canons on the Letters of the Apostle Paul and a fragment quoted in Orosius' *Commonitorium*, 12-19.

¹⁷⁵ Jerome instructed Lucinius and Theodora from the East on ascetic practice, and on Lucinius' death, via correspondence with the presbyter Abigaus, continued to remind Theodora to keep to her chosen path, Jerome, *Epistulae*, Ep.76.3 (CSEL 55:36, 12-20).

¹⁷⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* II, 47 (CCSL 1:100); *Priscillian* (Conti), Tractate II, 68-81. In this Priscillian defends the proposition that he was condemned at the Council.

canons fears by the bishops are revealed; the attendance of women followers at bible readings in houses with unrelated men, fasting on Sundays and the withdrawal from church worship at certain festivals, the title of teacher being given to unauthorised persons, the practice of walking with unshod feet - believed to be a sign of magic ritual - and probably most importantly, the retreat to mountain cells and to rural homes and villas away from the control of the church.¹⁷⁷ (It is also fair to say that these canons can also be seen to reflect concerns by the bishops over their general lack of authority over the actions of the Christians in their sees). In spite of his possibly invalid ordination as Bishop of Avila by his episcopal followers, in the five years following the Zaragoza Council Priscillian fought accusations of heresy. These chiefly focused on his supposed promotion of Gnostic doctrines akin to Manicheaism, and led ultimately to his death.¹⁷⁸ It is thus striking that Prudentius does not seem to refer explicitly in any of his writings to Priscillian or 'Priscillianism' – why?

The resemblance between Prudentius' lifestyle and that of Priscillian may have warned the poet away from specifically targeting the man and his beliefs in his poetry. Prudentius, after all, also practised vegetarianism, praised the celibacy of the martyr virgins and worshipped in his home, while his instructional verses might be seen by the Church hierarchy as unauthorised teaching by a non-cleric. Prudentius' criticism of Manichaeism, as well as Sabellianism, which had also been associated with Priscillian, and his attack on Marcion's dualist creed may have been the closest he chose to get to outright criticism of a way of life with which he may have had sympathy.¹⁷⁹ The church in Hispania continued to fear what would come to be called 'Priscillianism'. A Council was held in Toledo in 400AD to try to eliminate the support for it which still existed, particularly in Gallaecia, and to try to discourage the reading of Priscillian's works and veneration for him as a martyr.¹⁸⁰ A fact that perhaps both highlights the significance of Prudentius' silence, and explains it: he could either ignore Priscillian, or risk drawing attention to him and his own works.

¹⁷⁷ Vives, *Concilios*, Council of Zaragoza, 16-18, canons 1, 2, 4 and 7; Bishops came not only from Hispania, but from Aquitania where Priscillian also had many followers: Phoebadius of Agen and Delphinus of Bordeaux, known from other documents, were present there, Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 12.

¹⁷⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* II, 48-51 (CSEL 1:101-3) on events leading to Priscillian's death.

¹⁷⁹ Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 87. Priscillian was charged with being a 'Unionita' - see n.168 regarding Prudentius' condemnation of heresies.

¹⁸⁰ Chadwick, *Priscillian*, 170-88.

It is also unclear why Prudentius does not cite Arianism more specifically in his criticism of unorthodox beliefs since there is evidence that it had caused problems in Hispania in the past. There had been a crisis in the 350's when bishops Ossius of Córdoba and Potamius of Lisbon had been drawn into acknowledging the validity of Arianism, seemingly under pressure from the Arian Emperor.¹⁸¹ Also the figure of bishop Gregory of Elvira had famously been a leading rigorist in the pursuit of those clerics who had lapsed into Arian beliefs.¹⁸² More currently Siricius in his letter to Himerius of Tarragona in 384AD had advised the bishop on dealing with the readmittance to the Catholic faith of '*impiis Arianis*'.¹⁸³ Prudentius does, however, make one named attack, in the *Psychomachia*, on Arrius (sic), warning that this wolf (as a symbol of heresy again) may yet disguise himself as a sheep, and kill the lambs of orthodoxy.¹⁸⁴ It is the *Apotheosis*, however, that contains Prudentius' strongest defence of Nicene orthodoxy. In his prologue to this poem Prudentius affirmed the rightness of the principles of the Nicene creed of God the three in one: "*est tria summa deus, trinum specimen, vigor unus*".¹⁸⁵ Subsequently, for the first three hundred and twenty lines of the main body of the poem, he forcefully expounded his orthodox view of the Trinity. Prudentius' emphatic submission regarding the truth of this doctrine to his audience is a manifest confirmation that, as demonstrated in Chapter One, it was not a given that all Hispanic Christians were necessarily staunchly pro-Nicene in their beliefs.¹⁸⁶

This chapter opened with a description of the Varenian medallion which prompted analysis of the nature of Prudentius' Spanish audience. We have seen that this was likely to have been made up of rich elite members of society, probably literate and cultivated, but by no means necessarily committed to the Christian faith. It is clear from the evidence presented in this chapter that Prudentius had good reason to be concerned about the strength and orthodoxy of the Christian faith of his audience since it gives a confused picture of belief systems in Hispania which in no way backs

¹⁸¹ Conti, in *Potamius of Lisbon*, details Potamius' and Ossius' involvement with Arianism, 7-40.

¹⁸² V. Escribano Paño, 'Heresy and Orthodoxy in Fourth-Century Hispania: Arianism and Priscillianism' in Bowes and Kulikowski, *Hispania*, 121-149, at 135-5.

¹⁸³ Siricius, *S. Siricii Papae, Epistolae et Decreta*, 1 (PL 13: 1133).

¹⁸⁴ *Psych.* (CCSL 126: 177, lines 794-5). Faith, who has just defeated Heresy, is made to utter this warning.

¹⁸⁵ *Apoth.* (CCSL 126: 73, line I). "God is three supremes, threefold in person, one living power" (tr.) Thomson, 117.

¹⁸⁶ Chapter 1, 29-31, on the orthodoxy of Christians at Theodosius' Court; Ulrich, 'Nicaea', at 20 on the late arrival of the text of the Nicene creed in Hispania via Gregory of Elvira.

up the image of Nicene orthodoxy in the province which has been proposed in the past.¹⁸⁷ There are few positive indications that the villa elite who must have been his prime audience engaged in a Christian way of life. Although this would soon change, in the fourth century the elite of Hispania did not seem to need to compete in the Christian stakes in the same way that they did in secular matters.¹⁸⁸

There is evidence in both town and country that the people of Hispania lived among and were comfortable with ‘non-Christian’ symbols, images and rituals. Where Christian practices existed they could be in communities far from the control of the official church hierarchy, where Prudentius feared not only paganism but heresy and schism could thrive. Episcopal authority on the ground frequently seems to have been fragmentary or unwanted. We do not know if tensions arose between Prudentius and the church hierarchy over the didactic nature of his verses. Nevertheless, Prudentius was determined to make a difference and to use his talents to further the cause of his faith. If Prudentius could strengthen the Christian commitment of his influential elite audience, its members could use their authority to try to impose their beliefs on their dependents, and their socio-cultural network to spread the word of God to their peer group.¹⁸⁹ If the institutional church could not always reach its intended audience, perhaps Prudentius could succeed where its authority failed. Prudentius’ poetry treated many aspects of the Christian faith, but it was in his martyr poems that he spoke most personally and intimately to his audience in Hispania, and it is these poems which will be considered in the next chapter.

¹⁸⁷ Williams and Friel, *Theodosius*, 52.

¹⁸⁸ The fact that bishops in all of Gaul numbered twice as many as in proportion to Hispania seems to indicate that the competition for Church leadership was greater there, see n.152 above.

¹⁸⁹ Augustine once stated that if a certain noble in the region of Hippo converted no pagans would be left, his power being such that he could influence all around him. “Ille nobilis, si Christianus esset, nemo remaneret paganus”, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 54.13 (CCSL 39: 666, lines 3-4); We can see Prudentius’ intention to involve his servants in his Christian beliefs in *Cath. IX* (CCSL 126: 47, lines 1-2) where he instructs as follows: “da, puer, plectrum, choreis ut canam fidelibus dulce carmen et melodum, gesta Christi insignia” – give me my quill, servant, so that I may sing a sweet, tuneful song in faithful trochees of the glorious deeds of Christ.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PERISTEPHANON AND MARTYR CULTS IN HISPANIA

I. Introduction

If I remember well, most beautiful Rome honours this [martyr] on the Ides of August ... and I would like you too, holy teacher, to count it among your yearly festivals. Believe that he will bring health-giving days to those who venerate him, and give back rewards to those honouring his day. Together with the festivals of Cyprian and Chelidonius and Eulalia, let this day come to pass for you.¹

These few lines from Prudentius' poem celebrating the martyr Hippolytus, addressed to bishop Valerianus (probably of Calagurris), serve as a starting point for an assessment of the relationship between the poet and martyr worship in Hispania in the late fourth and early fifth century – the subject of this chapter. They demonstrate Prudentius' use of his poetry to encourage his audience to venerate those who had, in the past, suffered and died for their Christian faith. They were written as a result of a visit to Rome by Prudentius during which he sought out the inscriptions at the burial sites of the Christian martyrs at the behest of bishop Valerianus whom Prudentius describes as his "*sancte magister*".² The poem is noteworthy for Prudentius' vivid description of Hippolytus' tomb and of his emotional and reviscent experiences in this sacred space.

Although – as we shall see - these verses manifest the poet's plan to encourage his Christian community in Hispania to partake in the same benefits and solace he derived from martyr worship, they also indicate that there was already an awareness in Hispania of this type of cult. The cult of martyr veneration had grown during the fourth century across both the Eastern and Western provinces of the Roman Empire, popularised by church leaders like Damasus, the Spanish bishop of Rome who had set up the inscriptions sought by Prudentius on his Roman pilgrimage. In the above

¹ *Pe.XI* (CCSL 126: 377-8, lines 231-238): "Si bene commemorini, colit hunc pulcherrima Roma Idibus Augusti mensis ... quem te quoque, sancte magister, annua festa inter dinumerare velim. Crede, salutigeros feret hic venerantibus ortus lucis honoratae praemia restituens. Inter sollemnes Cypriani vel Chelidoni Eulaliaeque dies currat et iste tibi".

² *Pe.XI* (CCSL 126:233, lines 1-4).

extract Prudentius referred to the local Spanish saints, Chelidonius (of his home town, Calagurris) and Eulalia (of the capital, Mérida) whom he says were already the subjects of celebratory feast days in his Christian community.³ These two festivals were probably focused at the martyrs' tombs.⁴ However, it seems that, according to Prudentius, the saints' days could also be celebrated elsewhere in Hispania. Therefore, although Prudentius received inspiration in the physical presence of Hippolytus' remains, his words suggest that this bodily presence was not necessary in order to benefit from a martyr's blessing.⁵ This is confirmed by the poet's mention of the North African Saint Cyprian, whose feast day was also being celebrated in Hispania.⁶ Thus a picture emerges from Prudentius' work of communities of Christians in Hispania who were ready to practise the 'health-giving' worship of martyrs, whether those martyrs were Spanish or from elsewhere.⁷ They saw the benefit of making pilgrimages to the tombs of these martyrs as Prudentius had done. Nonetheless, even if they did not pursue the pilgrim's role, it seems that there were those in his audience who recognized that it was still possible to receive a saint's benediction and channel his or her power to their advantage, by honouring the saint on his or her special day.⁸

Nevertheless, as proposed in Chapter Two, there must be doubts as to the depth and strength of Christian belief in Hispania in the late fourth and fifth centuries. Prudentius had a particular attachment to the martyr cults, evidenced by his writing fourteen poems, of which his poem to Hippolytus was one, collectively called the *Peristephanon* (the Crowns of the Martyrs). These poems were on the subject of Hispanic and non-Hispanic saints and were vigorously-told epic stories of the suffering and deaths of martyrs, designed to stimulate and revivify the Christian

³ Saints which were also celebrated by Prudentius in poems, *Pe. I* and *Pe. III*.

⁴ *Pe. I* (CCSL 126: 255, lines 116-120). Prudentius says Chelidonius' body was located in "our town" - "martyrum ... membra nostro consecravim oppido" - and praised there; *Pe. III* (CCSL 126: 285, lines 211-2): "venerari ossa libet ossibus altar et inpositum". "We will venerate her bones and the altar placed over her bones".

⁵ A. Thacker, 'Loca Sanctorum: The Significance of Place in the Study of the Saints', in A. Thacker, and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1-43. At 4, referencing the *Peristephanon* poems, Thacker states "rooted as they are in their own locality, they are not confined by it; far from being locked in their terrestrial tombs, from their seat in heaven they could respond to the prayers and invocation of clients throughout the world".

⁶ *Pe. II* (CCSL 126: 276, lines 551-2): Prudentius, in his poem to St. Laurence refers to the saint having two places, one of the body and the other in heaven.

⁷ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 377, line 235): "salutigeros".

⁸ As can be seen in the above introductory quotation from *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 377-8, lines 231-8).

belief of Prudentius' audience.⁹ The *Peristephanon* poems, which impressed on the members of the villa-poet's audience the beneficent effects which would ensue if the martyrs were incorporated in their prayers, could also serve as a recreation, and their substance as a substitute, for the martyrs' physical presence. To quote Jill Ross:

Prudentius makes possible full disclosure and possession of the holy by turning martyrs into texts that can potentially reach many faithful. By touching *and* reading the text, Christians can experience the holiness and glory of martyrdom more fully than by going on a pilgrimage.¹⁰

Although it is likely that Prudentius' audience would have heard as well as read his poetry, his verses were a means by which his audience physically inhabit the same spiritually-uplifting space as the martyrs.

Much secondary work, following the publication of Peter Brown's seminal book, 'The Cult of the Saints,' has been written on the phenomenon of the growth of martyr cults during the fourth century and onwards, although hagiographic documents had been examined and studied by the Bollandists, in particular Hippolyte Delehaye, since as far back as the seventeenth century.¹¹ The latest general study on early martyrs in English is by Timothy Barnes, while Anglophone writers on Prudentius' martyrs include Palmer, Roberts, Malamud, Grig, Petruccione and Mastrangelo.¹² Two valuable studies on the martyrs of Hispania by Spanish writers are those of García Rodríguez and Castillo Maldonado.¹³ The work of Bowes

⁹ Prudentius' intentions are clear from words in his *Praefatio* in which he states he will "devote song to the martyrs" (Carmen martyribus devoveat) (CCSL 126: 2, line 42). It is also seen in the exhortatory nature of the content of many of his martyr poems, as will be seen in this chapter.

¹⁰ J. Ross, 'Dynamic writing and Martyr's bodies in Prudentius' *Peristephanon*', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 3.3 (1995), 325-55; cf. Brown, *Cult*, "the reading (at a saint's festival) of the *passio* gave a vivid, momentary face to the invisible *praesentia* of the saint", 82; See also C. Rapp, 'Holy Texts, Holy Men and Holy Scribes', in W. Klingshorn, L. Safran (eds.), *The Early Christian Book* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 194-223, at 195 and 219-222.

¹¹ For example, H. Delehaye, *Les Origines du Culte des Martyrs* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1933).

¹² T. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Palmer, *Prudentius*; Roberts, *Poetry and the cult of the Martyrs*; Malamud, *A Poetics of Transformation*; Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity*; J. Petruccione's work includes, 'The Persecutor's Envy and the Rise of the Martyr Cult: "Peristephanon" Hymns 1 and 4', *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 45, 4 (1991); Mastrangelo, *The Roman Self in Late Antiquity*.

¹³ C. García Rodríguez, *El culto de los santos en la España romana y visigoda* (Madrid: CSIC., 1966); P. Castillo Maldonado, *Los mártires hispanorromanos y su culto en Hispania de la Antigüedad Tardía* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1999).

and Kulikowski has also contributed to the English speakers' knowledge of the archaeology of Hispanic Christian sites.¹⁴

This chapter centres on Prudentius' promotion of martyr worship as a means of protection, comfort and salvation for the Christians of Hispania. It is not my intention to pursue a detailed analysis of the linguistic skills that Prudentius used to achieve this effect. That has been covered well by authors such as those named above. I will first review the background to the cult of martyrdom, prevalent at the time, which had so attracted Prudentius and brought him to write the *Peristephanon* poems. I will then highlight aspects of these poems which show the poet's intention to stimulate the interest of a specifically Spanish audience, although I also consider the likely early interest in his work in Southern Gaul. I will then look at other evidence as to whether martyr cults did indeed have a following of some significance in Hispania in the time of Prudentius.

In the analysis that follows I shall not only be taking the conventional path of examining textual evidence, but I shall also, exceptionally, be examining material evidence which might throw light on this subject. There is some indication from both kinds of primary sources as to what the situation was vis-a-vis saints' cults, but one of the difficulties in determining the strength of martyr veneration in Hispania is that so much of the evidence cited by historians links back to Prudentius' body of work.¹⁵ Without the *Peristephanon* poems how much, in fact, do we know about the existence of martyr cults there? I propose that if these poems are taken out of the equation, the evidence for a vital cult of the saints in Hispania in the fourth and early fifth century starts to look very slim. Was Prudentius trying to impose on his audience beliefs in the power of the martyrs which had barely taken hold there? Was there, thus, a very valid need, in his eyes, for his poetry to have a positive proselytising effect? And so I shall conclude by considering the extent to which the later popularity of martyr cults in Hispania (and in Southern Gaul) might have *resulted* from Prudentius' verses.

¹⁴ Bowes and Kulikowski, especially articles in *Hispania in late Antiquity*, and also Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, in particular Ch.10.

¹⁵ E.g. Castillo Maldonado, *Los Mártires*, 108. The *Peristephanon* is a "una fuente de extraordinario valor en lo referente a lugares martiriales y determinados aspectos culturales": "a source of extraordinary value with reference to martyrial places and certain aspects of cults".

II. The Establishment of the Martyr Cults

The *Peristephanon* demonstrates the importance of the cult of martyr worship to Prudentius and to late Roman Christianity in general. With the cessation of persecution and the establishment of Christianity as a favoured religion of the Roman Empire, Christians could look back and pay tribute to those who had suffered for their faith. These were the “very special dead” – souls whose memory should be honoured because, as Augustine wrote, “they were the holy men of God who fought for the truth even to the death of their bodies, so that true religion might be made known”.¹⁶

Across the Empire, many of the martyrs were buried in the cemeteries which lay outside of the walls of cities, and it was here that the cult of their worship tended to be centred during the fourth and fifth centuries.¹⁷ The worship of these saints broke not only the barrier between the living and the dead at the site of the martyrs’ tombs but also the barrier between the living within the city walls and the dead beyond.¹⁸ Their tombs became a focus of ritual for Christian communities and elaborate shrines began to be built over their burial places.¹⁹ At these shrines festivals were held to celebrate the martyrs’ triumph over pain and death, with Christian calendars coming into existence which recorded their feast days.²⁰ In some places, crowds poured out from the cities to enjoy the companionship of the martyrs and their fellow Christians, to the extent that Augustine complained about the uproarious behaviour which accompanied night vigils at St. Cyprian’s shrine in North Africa.²¹ But these pleasurable visits to the tombs of the martyrs offered relief and protection from the stresses of life. John Chrysostom, for example, taught that “comfort and consolation comes to all human beings from these saints’ tombs” – their “coffins render our

¹⁶ Brown, *Cult*, as described in his Chapter 4; Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 8.27 (CCSL 47: 248, lines 3-5).

¹⁷ Brown, *Cult*, 4 -5; See also Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead*, 2-12, on Christian burial places of Rome and Carthage becoming associated with the cult of the martyrs.

¹⁸ *C.Th.* 9.17.6. (given at Heraclaea, July 30, 381AD). In 391AD the law that burial of the dead should be outside the city walls was still being reiterated (although this could be a situation particularly applicable to the place of issue).

¹⁹ R. Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a city, 312-1308* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 24-8. Constantine developed shrines for the saints Peter and Lawrence, for example.

²⁰ Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 79. The earliest of these was the mid-fourth-century *Depositio martyrum* which recorded twenty-four feast days.

²¹ As described by Jerome, *Epistulae*, Ep.107.1 (CSEL 55: 290-1, 1, lines 11-13); P.Brown, ‘Enjoying the saints in late antiquity’, *EME*, 9.1 (2000), 4.

souls calm and safe”.²² Thus, a shrine was a place for meditation and prayer and possibly the confession of sins.

A martyr could become a personal patron to the supplicant, mimicking the client/patron relationship of the secular world.²³ Now dwelling in heaven alongside the Lord, he or she was positioned to act as an intercessor between man and God. This intercession could also channel God’s power to work miracles of healing for the faithful, and the martyr shrines became a place of hope for the sick and dying.²⁴ A given martyr could take on the role of defender and patron, not just of the individual, but of whole cities. Prudentius makes this point in his poem to the eighteen martyrs of Zaragoza, whose sacrifice has driven the demons from their city.²⁵ Bishops harnessed the power of saints situated on their doorsteps. Ambrose of Milan expressed the need for soldiers who were not of this world, but of Christ, to protect the Church.²⁶ This powerful patronage could be a means of strengthening the bishop’s authority and prestige and of improving the status of a city.

The activities of Damasus, Pope from 366-384AD, showed how martyrs could be used as tools in ecclesiastical power politics. Damasus secured the papal crown after violent conflicts with schismatic groups, often centred on the possession of religious sites inside and outside of Rome.²⁷ Realising how important these were, and to confirm his authority and unify a fractured Christian community, Damasus sought out and found martyr sites, like that of Hippolytus, all around Rome, inscribing them

²² John Chrysostom, ‘A Homily on the Holy Martyrs’, in *‘Let us Die that we may Live’: Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria (c. AD 350-450)* (ed. and tr.) J. Leemans, W. Mayer, P. Allen, B. Dehandschutter (London: Routledge, 2003), 120, 121.

²³ E.g. Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, 27 (CCSL 30: 268, lines 144-7). Here Paulinus refers to his special and personal relationship with Saint Felix.

²⁴ Augustine, *De civitate dei*, 22.9 (CCSL 48: 827). Augustine emphasised that miracles which men thought were achieved by martyrs were the result of martyrs’ prayers and their intercession with God, not of their direct actions.

²⁵ *Pe. IV* (CCSL 126: 288, lines 65-8): “Omnibus portis sacer inmolatus sanguis exclusit genus invidorum daemonum et nigras pepulit tenebras urbe piata”. “The sacrifice of holy blood has shut out the race of malign devils from all your gates and driven black darkness from your cleansed city” (tr.) Thomson, 161.

²⁶ Ambrose, *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, Pars X, Epistulae et Acta, Ep. 77.10* (CSEL 82.3: 132, lines 99-100): “Non saeculae milites sed milites Christi”. See also Prudentius’ Spanish soldier martyrs Emeterius and Chelidonius who “abandoned the flags of Caesar, and chose the banner of the cross”. *Pe. I* (CCSL 126: 252, line 34): “Caesaris vexilla linquunt, eligunt signum crucis”.

²⁷ See Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 127 for a summary of events; Ammianus Marcellinus, 18-21, 27.3.lines 11-15.

with poetic encomia composed by him.²⁸ By doing this he created a circle of saints which, like the *pomerium* of the pagan city, enclosed and protected the Christian city. A similar sentiment prevailed in the Eastern Empire where John Chrysostom believed that the tombs of martyrs surrounded Antioch like a protective wall.²⁹

Bishop Ambrose's *inventio* of the bodies of the Milanese martyrs Protasius and Gervasius was perhaps the most notorious case of this kind of (religious) power play. Milan had previously possessed no martyrs of its own, but the two martyrs' remains were conveniently found at a time when Ambrose was struggling against Arian enemies at the royal court and in need of positive Catholic publicity.³⁰ Disregarding the recent ruling which opposed the transfer of buried bodies to another place, Ambrose swiftly moved the martyrs' remains to a resting place under the altar of his newly-built basilica.³¹ Here a miracle immediately ensued as proof of their sainthood.³² Ambrose was, nevertheless, generous in donating the results of his discovery, sharing relics of the martyrs' bodies with other bishops, like Victricius of Rouen, in a network of *amicitia* which expedited the spread of the relic cults.³³ Victricius, writing c.396AD, received only "small relics and a little blood" but he believed that the "whole corporeal passion" was "present in fragments of the righteous".³⁴ Precious fragments like these, and even objects which had been in touch with the holy dead or their place of burial, were thought able to bring spiritual strength from the martyrs.³⁵ Prudentius seems aware of this practice as he introduces it into his poem on Vincent, in which, after the martyr's violent death, the faithful

²⁸ *Liber Pontificalis* (ed.), L.Duchesne (Paris: E. De Boccard, 1955), 212, 84 (Damasus), 7-8. "Hic multa corpora sanctorum requiavit et invenit, quorum etiam versibus declaravit"; A. Ferrua, *Epigrammata Damasiana* (Vatican City: Pontificio Instituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1942), xii-xiv, lists over sixty inscriptions which have been identified; See also Marianne Sághy, 'Scinditur in partes populus: Pope Damasus and the Martyrs of Rome', *EME*, 9.3. (2000), 273-87.

²⁹ Cf. J. Leemans, W. Mayer, P. Allen, B. Dehandschutter (ed. and tr.) 'Let us die that we may live': *Greek Homilies on Christian martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria (c.AD350-AD450)* (London: Routledge, 2003) at 5, which references John Chrysostom's words taken from 'On the Egyptian Martyrs'.

³⁰ N. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 209-217 on Ambrose's management of the 'discovery'.

³¹ *C. Th.* 9.17.7, 466, given at Constantinople, February 26, 386.

³² Ambrose, *Epistulae*, Ep. 77.1 (CSEL 82.3: 128, line 23). A blind man was healed - "dum transferimus caecus sanatus est".

³³ Brown, *Cult*, 90.

³⁴ Victricius' *de laude sanctorum* (CCSL 64) translated in G. Clark, 'Victricius of Rouen: Praising the Saints', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 7.3 (1999), 365-399, at 390 (9.29) and 393 (10.38).

³⁵ Ambrose, *Epistulae*, Ep. 77.9 (CSEL 82.3: 132, lines 89-91). Here Ambrose speaks of clothing laid on holy relics being given healing power.

gathered around his body and “many wet a linen garment with drops of blood to keep at home as a holy protection for the future”.³⁶

For most people the visit to a shrine would be a local affair, but it was not unheard of for enormous distances to be travelled. The religious tourist Egeria performed an epic journey from her native Hispania to visit the holy places of the bible and the shrines of martyrs in the 380's AD.³⁷ Jerome's companion, Paula, visited the Holy Land at a similar time, travelling there from Rome.³⁸ The making of the journey itself was part of the experience. The movement from home, breaking ties with all that was familiar, took on almost as much significance as the arrival at the place of holiness where the martyr had the power to transform the life of the pilgrim.³⁹ However, long-distance pilgrimage was likely to be affordable to the more affluent members of society. This elite could also, through influence, obtain relics of the holy for their own personal use.⁴⁰ Peter Brown has called attention to the fact that far from the elites capitulating to the popular needs and fears of the “vulgar majority” as earlier historians had been wont to propose, it was the more powerful members of society who were orchestrating the cult of the holy dead.⁴¹ The elite were leading the way in a top-down movement. It was this elite in Hispania and Southern Gaul whom Prudentius, the villa-poet, hoped to attract to the cult of martyr worship with his *Peristephanon* poems.

Although Prudentius is considered to be the most significant source for the martyrial cult in the Iberian Peninsula, his audience could well have had access to

³⁶ *Pe. V* (CCSL 126: 306, lines 341-4): “Plerique vestem linteam stillante tingunt sanguine, tutamen ut sacrum suis domi reserverent posteris”.

³⁷ *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land* (tr.) J. Wilkinson (London: S.P.C.K., 1971), 3, 20.5, 23.1-6. Egeria seems to have originated from Galicia, or perhaps Aquitaine.

³⁸ Jerome, *Epistulae*, *Ep.* 108 (CSEL 55: 310-325).

³⁹ There was a therapeutic value for the devotee in overcoming the distance to be travelled before closeness to the saint could be achieved, which can be described as “the therapy of distance”. On this topic see R. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 151; Brown, *Cult*, 87; V. and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) especially at 15.

⁴⁰ Brown, *Cult*, 34. Lucilla, a noblewoman apparently from Spain and living in North Africa, owned a martyr's bone - as reported by Optatus of Milevis (1.16.); B. Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred: The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2005), 41. Gregory of Nyssa laid his family members next to martyr relics in a church built by his mother.

⁴¹ Brown, *Cult*, 17-22, 48-9; cf. H. Delehaye, *The Legend of the Saints* (tr.) D. Attwater (Dublin: Four Courts, 1998), 15.

other hagiographical literature.⁴² Since the second century *acta* and passions, often in the form of letters or narratives, some based apparently on court records, had circulated among Christian communities providing a means of remembering the glorious deaths of the martyrs. Seemingly the earliest of these was a record of the martyrdom of Polycarp, written c.157AD, and addressed, originally as a letter from Smyrna to the church of Philomelium, to “all the communities of the holy Catholic church everywhere”.⁴³ These documents were not reliable historical accounts in the traditional sense, and many come down to us in the form of later versions, whilst the authenticity of others is highly suspect.⁴⁴ The repetition of *topoi* meant that frequently their contents followed an expected pattern: the martyrs were taken for questioning before a judge, they were given the opportunity to recant their beliefs and to re-integrate back into Roman life by sacrificing to the gods, on refusal they were subjected to torture which they withstood with serenity, frequently sustained by heavenly visions, and they went happily to their deaths secure in the knowledge that they had won a victory over the devil and a place in heaven. Many of Prudentius’ *Peristephanon* poems contain elements of this pattern.⁴⁵

The feature common to these narratives was the willingness of their subjects to endure suffering and death. The martyr Justin and his companions declaimed “this is what we long for, this we desire”.⁴⁶ According to Prudentius, Fructuosus of Tarragona heard, as he entered the flames, a heavenly voice reassuring him: “happy the souls who mount through fire to the high place of God, for one day the everlasting fire will flee from them”.⁴⁷ By granting them salvation, death was the new happy ending to a narrative.⁴⁸ By their martyrdom they were imitating the suffering and death of Christ. Judith Perkins has described this early Christian

⁴² Castillo Maldonado, *Los Mártires*, 108. “El *Peristéfannon* es una fuente privilegiada para el culto martiral en la Península”.

⁴³ *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (ed. and tr.) H. Musurillo, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) 1, 4; Barnes, *Hagiography*, at 12-14 and 19. It is also the first record of the new meaning of martyrdom (c.157AD).

⁴⁴ Delehaye, *Legends*, Ch. 4 in particular on inauthentic texts; Barnes, *Hagiography*, Appendix 2 for modern collections, concluding with his own list of authentic texts, 356-9.

⁴⁵ For example, *Pe. I*, Emeterius and Chelidonius; *Pe. II*, Lawrence; *Pe. XI*, Hippolytus; *Pe. XIV*, Agnes.

⁴⁶ Musurillo, *Acts*, 4.4, *recension C*, 59.

⁴⁷ *Pe. VI* (CCSL 126: 317, lines 97-99): “*Felices animae quibus per ignem, celsa scandere contigit Tonantis, quas olim fugiet perennis ignis*” - an intriguing use of the classical ‘Thunderer’ to refer to the Christian God.

⁴⁸ J. Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 24.

narrative representation as functioning to construct a community of sufferers.⁴⁹ This was how they identified themselves – how the sect defined and presented itself to its contemporaries. When persecution gradually ceased in the early years of the fourth century, finally concluding in both East and West in 324AD, it became hard for Christians to define themselves in this way. In fact the post-persecution Christian was more likely to suffer violence from within the Christian community than from external forces.⁵⁰

Ascetic extremists, as exemplified in the fourth-century texts on St Martin and St Antony, took over the model of the physical sufferer to some extent, redefining the concept of sanctity.⁵¹ Although as seen in Chapter Two, some, like the followers of Priscillian in Hispania, and perhaps even Prudentius himself, chose to adopt an ascetic, albeit less extreme, lifestyle. According to Augustine: “Suffering is our appointed task...the martyrs fulfilled that task. Let us fulfil it through piety if we cannot fulfil it through suffering”.⁵² However, since most would find the self-inflicted ordeals of the post-Constantinian saints and confessors unfeasible, listening to or reading the martyr texts could be a means of vicariously experiencing the torments of the heroes of the early church, while piously absorbing a narrative which was both historical and expositional.⁵³

The works of Eusebius of Caesarea and Lactantius, written at the beginning of the fourth century marked a start to post-persecution literature.⁵⁴ Eusebius incorporated versions of accounts of the deaths of these earlier “athletes of piety” into his triumphalist works, celebrating the victory of Christianity, most famously in his *Ecclesiastical History*.⁵⁵ Equally triumphalist, but presenting a reverse model Lactantius celebrated the destruction of those who had persecuted the martyrs in his

⁴⁹ Perkins, *Suffering Self*, 40.

⁵⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, 202-3, 22.5. 4.

⁵¹ Perkins, *Suffering Self*, 204-5.

⁵² Augustine, *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount: with seventeen related sermons*, ‘Sermon 5; Life from Death (John 3.16; Rom. 8.32)’ (tr.) D. Kavanagh (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1951), 311-320, at 311.

⁵³ Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 1 (tr) K.Lake (London; W. Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), 5, Preface, 405.

⁵⁴ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Vol I ; Vol II (tr.) J. Oulton (London: W. Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), esp. Chapters 8 and 9; Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* (ed. and tr.) J.Creed (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).

⁵⁵ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, I, 5, preface, 407. He also put together a collection called the ‘Martyrs of Palestine’; See Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 17-18, re the metaphor of the games.

work, ‘On the Deaths of the Persecutors’.⁵⁶ Later in the fourth century Church fathers contributed to the body of work celebrating the lives and deaths of the martyrs. Along with promoting the veneration of the physical remains of saints, Ambrose wrote martyr hymns for the saints Lawrence and Agnes, amongst others.⁵⁷ Written texts arose from homilies originally delivered as performances on the annual feast days of the saints. For example, in the 370’sAD Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa both preached homilies on the dreadful death from exposure of the ‘Forty Martyrs of Sebaste’, probably both using adaptations from older anonymous documents as a source.⁵⁸ Augustine preached sermons celebrating the martyrs on their festival days, including some on the martyrs of Hispania.⁵⁹ In Hispania itself, before Prudentius’ verses were written, there is little extant evidence of martyrial texts, with the exception of Potamius of Lisbon who wrote on the martyrdom of Isaiah (although not strictly a Christian martyr).⁶⁰

The foregoing provides one context in which to set the creation of Prudentius’ *Peristephanon* poems. His writing, as will be seen, showed an awareness of the spiritual comfort which could be derived from martyr veneration. It also showed a knowledge of the content, structure and patterns of earlier martyr texts, although, as other writers had done, he was not averse to reworking these earlier sources. However, he could do more than provide the narrative instructional prose which authors like Eusebius produced.⁶¹ He was a talented and innovative poet who could translate his pious belief in the power of the martyr saints, as deeply held as any churchman’s, into literary works of art. These ‘works of art’, moreover, spoke of Christian themes to individuals who shared his Hispanic background in the language of the classical past.

III. The Peristephanon Poems: The Saints of Hispania.

The Peristephanon poems comprise a collection of tributes to an eclectic mix of martyrs whose stories must have appealed to Prudentius, or conceivably to an

⁵⁶ Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*.

⁵⁷ Ambroise de Milan, *Hymnes* (tr.Fr.) J. Fontaine (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1992), no.8, 376-9, (Agnes) and no.13, 560-3, (Lawrence).

⁵⁸ Basil of Caesarea, ‘A Homily on the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste’; Gregory of Nyssa, ‘First Homily on the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste’, both in Leemans et al., *Let us Die*, 68-76, 92, 93-107.

⁵⁹ Augustine, for instance those on St. Vincent (PL 38: 1253-68), *Sermones*, 274, 275, 276, 277.

⁶⁰ Potamius, *Opera, De Martyrio Esaiae* (CCSL 69A: 198-203).

⁶¹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Vol.I, 5, preface, 405.

influential member of his audience. They were probably not composed initially as a unified collection, as they were written at different times, although Prudentius may have intended that they would be put together at a later date.⁶² Gennadius, in his mid-fifth-century *de viris inlustribus*, does not give them the title *Peristephanon*, although his reference to a single book in praise of martyrs indicates that by then they formed a whole.⁶³

The poems largely follow the traditional format established by older texts. His protagonists are brought to be judged but continue to declare their faith. They are then tortured before joyfully welcoming death and securing their places in heaven. However, as we shall see, Prudentius' narratives differ in that most exhibit extreme levels of violence and ingenious forms of torture which were meted out to the martyrs. The focus of earlier *acta martyrii* was more usually the martyr's defence of his or her faith, but Prudentius' poetry brings the agonies of the saint to centre stage.⁶⁴ His poems are also characterised by the frequent inclusion of a closing message to his audience, proclaiming the benefits of honouring the saint and requesting his or her protection.⁶⁵

Although some of the poems have been entitled hymns and were later incorporated in some form in the Mozarabic Hymnal, it seems unlikely that they were written with a view to a liturgical function.⁶⁶ They were written in complicated lyrical metres and must have been intended for an educated audience, both Christian and non-Christian. This audience would be entertained, and hopefully spiritually uplifted, by the villa-poet's vibrant and action-packed narratives positing the martyrs as "new epic heroes" in the tradition of the classical poetry of the past.⁶⁷

The choice of saints for commemoration in verse reflects Prudentius' pride in these heroes of Hispania and his desire to impress on his fellow countrymen the

⁶² *Pe. II* on Lawrence was written before Prudentius visited Italy. *Pes. IX, XI* and *XII* were written during or after this visit.

⁶³ Gennadius, *De viris inlustribus*, 66, 13, 8-10. "Fecit et in laudem martyrum sub aliquorum nominibus invitatorum ad martyrium librum unum".

⁶⁴ Brown, *Cult*, refers to a strong element of *psychodrame* in Prudentius' poems, in which "the fragilities of the body are laid bare with macabre precision", 83.

⁶⁵ Augustine, similarly, closes his sermon on Fructuosus in the same way (PL 38, 1247-52), see n.81 below.

⁶⁶ F. Raby, *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry from the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 50.

⁶⁷ Mastrangelo, *The Roman Self*, 57.

importance of the martyrs dwelling amongst them. This is made clear by the fact that, of his fourteen *Peristephanon* poems, six pay tribute to Spanish saints. Of the remainder, five are based in Italy, Cyprian is from North Africa, Romanus from Antioch and Quirinus probably from Illyricum. In the poems devoted to the martyrs of Hispania Prudentius emphasizes the Spanishness of his protagonists, the protection his homeland gains from their presence and the need for the people of Hispania to acknowledge and venerate these native saints. These aspects of his work will be stressed in this section. The poem which is most often located in first place in manuscripts of the *Peristephanon* collection, that concerning Emeterius and Chelidonius from Prudentius' own Calagurris, begins with an encomium to Hispania which summarises the patriotic fervour of the Spanish poems:

Written in heaven are the names of two martyrs; Christ has entered them there in letters of gold, while on earth He has recorded them in characters of blood. For this glory the land of Spain has the fortune to be held in honour through all the world. This place has seemed to God worthy to keep their bones, pure enough to be host to their blessed bodies.⁶⁸

Prudentius was the first to tell this story of these two soldiers who were, after a "thousand tortures" executed for their refusal to worship "black idols".⁶⁹ However, the poet gives no further details of the actual martyrdom. He states that the events surrounding their death are lost to posterity, since the record of the trial and death of the martyrs was destroyed by their persecutors.⁷⁰

The extent to which Prudentius embellished the few facts that might have been known about the lives of Emeterius and Chelidonius is unknowable. This appears to have been a genuine local cult with which an audience from around Calagurris would have been familiar: as shown at the head of this chapter, Prudentius speaks of the celebration of Chelidonius' feast day. Prudentius' narrative contains one distinctive feature – the miracle of a ring and a handkerchief ascending heavenwards

⁶⁸ *Pe. I* (CCSL 126: 251, lines 1-6): "Scripta sunt caelo duorum martyrum vocabula, aureis quae Christus illic adnotavit litteris, sanguinis notis eadem scripta terris tradidit. Pollet hoc felix per orbem terra Hibera stemmate, hic locus dignus tenendis ossibus visus deo qui beatorum pudicus esset hospes corporum".

⁶⁹ *Pe. I* (CCSL 126:253,line 42; 254, line 70).

⁷⁰ *Pe. I* (CCSL 126: 254,lines 73-78).

from the two saints at their deaths, symbolising the canonisation of the martyrs. This curious event passed into the Divine Office for the saints in the seventh century at the behest of Isidore of Seville.⁷¹ The fact that Prudentius planned this poem for a local audience can be confirmed by an instruction to believe in the holiness of the blood of these martyrs which is directly addressed to the “Vascones”— the people of the Vascon territory around Calagurris.⁷² In the final lines of the poem, there is again a link to Calagurris. His audience is told that the Saviour himself consecrated the martyrs’ bodies in our town (*nostro oppido*) and “they now protect the people who live by the Ebro’s waters”.⁷³ Following this assertion of the martyrs’ power, the poem concludes with the supplication, “let us hold a festival this day and consecrate our joy”.⁷⁴

It would appear that the citizens of Calagurris did honour Emeterius and Chelidonius since Prudentius seems to report in *Peristephanon* VIII that a baptistery was built on the site of their martyrdom. However, the title of the poem (“On a spot where martyrs suffered at Calagurris, now a baptistery”) may well have been added at a later date and some manuscripts do not contain this reference. Within *Peristephanon* VIII itself there is no specific mention of Calagurris, only that this was a place where two *viri* were killed in the Lord’s name. The hypothesis that the two were Emeterius and Chelidonius, while very likely, is unfortunately unverifiable. The rest of the poem contains verses which extol the cleansing virtues of baptismal water, and parallel the salvation gained by the blood which flowed from the two martyrs with the water which flows at baptism. Lavarenne suggests that this short poem was probably intended as an inscription on a baptistery.⁷⁵

Peristephanon III also recites a narrative concerning a martyr unknown in the written records before Prudentius’ poem. Like the soldier saints, Eulalia is closely

⁷¹ Lavarenne, *Prudence*, 20; *Liturgia Mozarabica: Secundum Regulam Beati Isidori* (PL 85: 732), Emeterii et Celedonii; The ring as a symbol of the saint and his faith also appears in the late second-century ‘Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas’ where Perpetua’s companion Saturus passes his ring, dipped in his blood, to one of his persecutors before dying, Musurillo, *Acts*, 130-1; see 113 below for a sarcophagus commemorating Perpetua found in Hispania.

⁷² *Pe.I* (CCSL 126: 255, line 94).

⁷³ *Pe.I* (CCSL 126: 255, lines 115-7): “Sospitant quae nunc colonos quos Hiberus adluit”.

⁷⁴ *Pe. I* (CCSL 126: 256, lines 118, 120): “Sit dies haec festa nobis, sit sacratum gaudium”. This exhortation seems to be addressed to the women of the town, “state nunc, hymnite, matres”, although no reason is given in the poem for this group to be singled out. Cf. Victricius, *De laude sanctorum*, 3, who also writes of the “prayers of mothers”, Clark, ‘Victricius’, 380.

⁷⁵ Lavarenne, *Prudence*, 106.

and proudly identified with a particular Spanish location, in this case, Emerita (Mérida), the site of her martyrdom. According to Prudentius, because of Eulalia this powerful and populous city is now “greater because of the blood of martyrdom and a virgin’s epitaph” – it is thus doubly-blessed.⁷⁶ His story tells of a young girl who refuses, against her family wishes, to make a rich marriage. She flees from her country home by night to present herself before her governor Maximian. Here she defiantly declares her Christian faith, in order to find death in its cause. Her virginal body is clawed to the bone and then put to the fire. Prudentius’ language here describing her suffering and her desperate modesty is distinctly erotic – but as she dies her spirit in the form of a dove flies to heaven confirming her sanctity.⁷⁷

Now that she is martyred, Prudentius goes on to describe Eulalia’s resting place in glowing terms, impressing on his audience the importance of its location. Her tomb is in Mérida. It is a famous town in Vettonia which lies by the remarkable river Ana (Guardiana) which washes its beautiful walls with green waters. The building which holds the tomb is described as brilliant and colourful. Mérida has served its martyr well. (Although whether Prudentius’ description matches the reality will be discussed later in this chapter). Prudentius concludes his verses with an assurance that her bones would be venerated and that the saint would always cherish the people of her town. Again, as with Chelidonium, the celebration of her feast day seems to be confirmed by Prudentius’ words in *Peristephanon* XI. With his poem on Eulalia Prudentius provides a narrative for Hispania’s own archetype of the virgin martyr. Although he also commemorates Saint Agnes in *Peristephanon* XIV, he is perhaps showing that the virginal suffering of the Spanish Eulalia can be favourably compared with the more famous torments of the renowned Italian martyr.

The town of Tarraco (Tarragona) also received an accolade from Prudentius. In *Peristephanon* VI, he tells of Bishop Fructuosus and his two deacons, Augurius and Eulogius, who suffered death by burning in 259AD. According to Prudentius, “God surely looks with kindness on the Spaniards, since the mighty Trinity crowns an

⁷⁶ *Pe. II* (CCSL 126: 278, lines 9-10): “Mage sanguine martyrii virgineoque potens titulo”. This “double virtue” seems to have made the saint more effective as an intercessor, see Grig, *Making Martyrs*, on Agnes, 84.

⁷⁷ I quote C. Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome* (New Haven; London: Yale, 2007) at 213: “Prudentius’ eroticised accounts of Christian virgins, most strikingly *Peristephanon* 3 on Eulalia and 14 on Agnes, stress the piquant combination of beautiful flesh and extreme torment”.

Iberian city with three martyrs”.⁷⁸ The story of the three is based on a known *acta* which Prudentius largely follows. This indicates that he knew the piece and, since his audience also may well have done so, wisely did not stray far from the known version. However, Prudentius, as a poet looking to entertain, produced a fuller account, more dramatic and emotionally charged.⁷⁹ The basic story, nevertheless, follows the traditional form. The bishop and his companions are summoned before the provincial governor and judged as guilty for refusing to worship the gods. They are taken to the amphitheatre where they joyfully embrace death by burning, their arms raised like the three Hebrews who were brought before Nebuchadnezzar. As they die they are seen to ascend to the heavens. Their followers gather up the ashes of the martyrs, but the three saints appear and beg them to bury them in one spot so that their remains are not scattered in different locations on resurrection.⁸⁰ This burial place is, according to Prudentius, in a *cavo...marmore*, which seems to indicate a marble sepulchre. However, like Eulalia’s tomb, it is uncertain, as will be seen below, what form this actually took.

Again Prudentius concludes *Peristephanon* VI with praise for the host city and an exhortation to celebrate the three saints:

O threefold honour, triple eminence, whereby our city’s head is raised up, towering over all the cities of Hispania (Hiberia). We will rejoice in our three patrons, under whose protection all we peoples of the Pyrenean lands are cherished. ...men, girls, boys, old men and women sing in the right way to your Fructuosus.⁸¹

Prudentius’ final words are to ask Fructuosus to protect Tarraco and to grant the poet himself relief from his own torments.

⁷⁸ *Pe. VI* (CCSL 126: 314, lines 4-6).

⁷⁹ Musurillo, *Acts*, 12, 176-185; For a close study of Fructuosus’ martyrdom, see Palmer, *Prudentius*, 205-226.

⁸⁰ This request is only touched on in the *Acta*, Musurillo, *Acts*, 184; In *Pe. VI* Prudentius is clearer and more detailed on its importance, which may reflect concerns he had about the division of martyr remains and the distribution of relics (CCSL 126: 319, lines 136-41).

⁸¹ *Pe. VI* (CCSL 126: 319, lines 142-7, 149-50): “O triplex honor, o triforme culmen, quo nostrae caput excitatur urbis, cunctis urbibus eminens Hiberis! Exultare tribus libet patronis, quorum praesidio foveamur omnes terrarum populi Pyrenearum...Heros virgo puer senex anulla, vestrum psallite rite Fructuosum”. Augustine, who knew of Fructuosus’ *Acta*, when preaching a sermon on the saint, made a similar closing exhortation that his listeners “venerate the martyrs, praise, love, proclaim, honour them: worship the God of the martyrs”. “Veneramini martyres, laudate, amate, praedicate, honorate: Deum martyrum colite”. *Sermones* 273.9 (PL 38: 1247-52).

Peristephanon IV is a hymn in honour of eighteen martyrs whose ashes our people, “*noster populus*”, keep in a single grave in Caesaraugusta (Zaragoza). This poem is remarkable for bringing the concept of the soteriological benefit of martyr death to the fore, as Prudentius claims that since it is filled with these great saints, Caesaraugusta has no need to fear “the downfall of this mortal world”.⁸² The martyrs’ sacrifice has driven the demons and the powers of darkness from the city, cleansing the streets where Christ now dwells, and enabling the salvation of its citizens. However, although Caesaraugusta is so blessed Prudentius does not neglect other cities which are also home to these “costly gifts”. He, therefore, before naming the eighteen, highlights the cities of Hispania which are also fortunate enough to possess martyrs: Tarraco; Emerita; and “*nostra*” Calagurris; Córdoba with Acisclus and Zoellus and three unnamed saints; Gerunda (Gerona) with Felix; Barchinon (Barcelona) with Cucufas; and Complutum (Alcalá) which holds Justus and Pastor. He also names Tingis (Tangier) and Cassian, since Tingitana was then part of Hispania, and Cyprian of Carthage who seems to have had a special link with Hispania, (see below). Significantly, also included in this list are Paulus of Narbo (Narbonne) and Genesius of Arelas (Arles), marking again the early interest which seems to have been shown in Prudentius’ verses in Southern Gaul and the interconnectedness of these regions.

Although he is venerated in his own *Peristephanon* poem, Vincent, who came from Caesaraugusta, is also given an extended tribute in this poem. Prudentius lays claim to the saint for the city of his birth, although he was martyred elsewhere in Hispania, near Saguntum, and buried there. Twice Prudentius states that he is ours, “*noster est*”. He was schooled in goodness and virtue in Caesaraugusta and he is worshipped here just as if his body lay in its native ground. Prudentius also makes mention, unusually, of a virgin saint, Encratis, who survived excruciating torture but whose suffering is remembered in the city.

⁸² *Pe. VI* (CCSL 126: 286, line 6: “mundi fragilis ruinam”; for a fuller discussion of this see J. Petruccione, ‘The Martyr Death as Sacrifice: Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 4. 9-42’, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 49 (1995), 245-257. Petruccione notes the boldness of Prudentius in introducing this concept, since it was apparently little known in his day, 252.

The poet finally names the eighteen martyrs who together with Vincent and Encratis protect Caesaraugusta.⁸³ Prudentius is again the first written source for the eighteen.⁸⁴ One assumes therefore that until his work was known they were only a local cult. He appears to know little about them as individuals which is probably why other saints figure so strongly in the poem. These martyrs are listed by Prudentius with few or no biographical details, so that Lavarenne, in fact, describes this poem as a sort of catalogue.⁸⁵

Once more Prudentius finalises a work by urging the people of the city to bow down before the saints who will save them. When the souls and limbs of the martyrs rise again all the people of Caesaraugusta will follow them.⁸⁶ This closing sentiment emphasizes the soteriological significance of martyr deaths and the salvation of the city which will result from their self-sacrifice.

In this hymn to the eighteen martyrs Prudentius most clearly links Vincent to Hispania. As if this has been said already to his audience, Vincent's own story, *Peristephanon V*, focuses on the suffering of the saint.⁸⁷ In fact, this is probably the most violent of the martyr poems, with the saint enduring many tortures: a grid above red-hot coals, enclosure in a black dungeon, bleeding wounds from a bed of jagged pots and from the inroads of the claw. Even after death his corpse is exposed, to be eaten by wild animals. After a bird protects the body, the latter is then taken out to sea for disposal to avoid its subsequent veneration. Serendipitously, it is washed back to the Spanish shore, where Vincent's followers are able to bury Vincent beneath an altar. Once more Prudentius finishes with an exhortation to revere the saint's festival day and to bow down before his remains and thereby receive Christ's forgiveness.

⁸³ *Pe. IV* (CCSL 126: 291-2, lines 145-64). These were Optatus, Lupercus, Successus, Martialis, Urbanus, Julia, Quintilian, Publius, Fronto, Felix, Caecilianus, Evotius, Primitivis, Apodemius, and four named Saturninus.

⁸⁴ García Rodríguez, *El Culto*, 324-7.

⁸⁵ Lavarenne, *Prudence*, 62.

⁸⁶ *Pe. IV* (CCSL 126: 293, lines 198-200): "Deinde mox resurgentes animas et artus tota sequeris".

⁸⁷ *Pe. V* (CCSL 126: 301-5, lines 211-332) details his tortures; in the earliest extant Prudentian manuscript, the Codex Parisinus latinus 8084 or Puteanus, containing the *Peristephanon* poems 1-5.142, Vincent's narrative, perhaps significantly, follows immediately after *Peristephanon IV*; A. Elliott, *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987), 28-9 contains the suggestion that since *Pe. IV* celebrated Vincent as a saint of Saragossa (sic), *Pe. V* does not mention his Spanish connection in order to universalize him as a "hero for all Christendom, not merely for Spain or for Saragossa".

Amid the gory details of Vincent's suffering an episode emerges which shows further evidence of Prudentius' acknowledgement of the local cult of personal relics. Vincent's followers are said to have dipped linen garments into the blood of the saint and retained them as holy protection for their descendants. As the practice of touching cloths against relics seems to have been a fourth-century innovation (see above), it is possible this incident was introduced by the poet into his narrative to reflect current practices, perhaps anachronistic in terms of what might have happened at the time of Vincent's martyrdom.

Prudentius not only highlights the importance of Spanish martyrs in these poems, but his work also focuses on the protection and benefits they can give to the cities in Hispania which were probably most familiar to him. As has been shown, Calagurris, Caesaraugusta, Emerita and Tarraco were all singled out in his *Peristephanon* narratives. His hometown was most likely to have been Calagurris, or possibly nearby Caesaraugusta, and he may well have held governmental positions in Tarraco, his provincial capital, or Emerita, the capital of Hispania. Thus, the Spanish poems may have taken on a further personal dimension for the poet.

IV. The Peristephanon Poems: Italy and Beyond

The choice of the rest of the *Peristephanon* poems may also have been dependant on a special connection with Prudentius. A further five of the *Peristephanon* poems show the importance that Prudentius attached to saints whose shrines were located in Italy, in particular, Rome: a treasure house of martyrs' remains, revered by Prudentius as the heart of the new Christian empire.⁸⁸ He seems to have written his poem on Lawrence (*Peristephanon* II) before his visit to Rome as he longingly declares, "scarcely have we heard how full Rome is of buried saints, how richly her city's soil blossoms with holy tombs".⁸⁹ That Prudentius was writing this in Hispania is clarified by the preceding lines which place him beside the "Vascon Ebro," with two mountain ranges (the Alps and the Pyrenees) lying between him and Rome. It is not surprising that Prudentius should have chosen to write about Lawrence since the saint seems to have been one of the most popular and the earliest-celebrated of

⁸⁸ Mastrangelo, *The Roman Self*, 3, describes Prudentius' poetry as a fusion of Roman poetry and Christianity which gives voice to a vision of Rome as a divine empire.

⁸⁹ *Pe. II* (CCSL 126: 275-6, lines 541-4): "Vix fama nota est abditis quam plena sanctis Roma sit quam dives urbanum solum sacris sepulcris floreat".

Roman martyrs.⁹⁰ His feast day appeared in the *Depositio martyrum* of 354AD and a basilica was built in his honour by Damasus, containing one of the Pope's inscriptions. Ambrose also wrote a hymn for him; Augustine included him in his sermons.⁹¹ And, of course, the traditional story of Lawrence's torture on a grill over hot coals provided a glowing poetic centrepiece where Prudentius could indulge in horrifying descriptions of the roasting flesh of the suffering saint.

The final lines of the poem confirm Prudentius' understanding that prayers could be made and granted by all saints wherever their remains lay. He concludes with a moment of private devotion in which he asks Lawrence to "be kind and hear the prayer of Prudentius [who is] guilty before Christ".⁹² It appears that there was no particular devotion to Lawrence in Hispania before Prudentius' time, evidenced by other texts or epigraphy, and since Lawrence is known to have been celebrated as a saint from the fifth century in Hispania, it could be that Prudentius' verses did have some effect on his audience.⁹³

Prudentius did subsequently travel to Italy and the remaining Italian poems appear to have originated from this time.⁹⁴ Agnes, who is the subject of *Peristephanon* XIV, was another of the saints who was commemorated in the early *Depositio martyrum* and was also remembered in a Damasian epigram. A basilica had been erected over her tomb on the Via Nomentana in Rome by Constantine's daughter Constantina, probably in the mid-fourth century. Subsequently Constantina was buried in a fine mausoleum adjacent to the church. During the fourth century the cemetery around Agnes' tomb became packed with burials, indicating that her cult was well-established at that time.⁹⁵ So perhaps Prudentius was drawn to the story of Agnes by observing the cultic activity which must have surrounded her tomb.

Prudentius' Agnes, as in other versions of her tale, was a young girl who was willing to die rather than to surrender her virginity. His poem on Agnes, however, is notable for the sexually-charged language, almost pornographic, which he uses to

⁹⁰ Lavarenne, *Prudence*, 28; García Rodríguez, *El Culto*, 176.

⁹¹ Ambrose, *Hymnes*, no.13, 560-3; Augustine, *Sermones*, 302-305 (PL 38: 1394-1400).

⁹² *Pe.II* (CCSL 126:277, lines 581-2): "audi benignus supplicem Christi reum Prudentium".

⁹³ García Rodríguez, *El Culto*, 180.

⁹⁴ See J. Harries, 'Prudentius and Theodosius', *Latomus*, 43 (1984) 69-84, for a discussion of dates.

⁹⁵ H. Brandenburg, *Ancient Churches of Rome from the Fourth to the Seventh Century* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), offprint : *The Basilica of S. Agnese* (Regensburg: Verlag Schnell und Steiner, 2006), 2-3.

describe her demands for the penetration of the executioner's sword.⁹⁶ In this Prudentius may have intended to titillate his audience, both in Hispania and elsewhere, but in the same story he also impressed on them the cleansing and purifying power which a virgin brought. Ambrose's hymn, written earlier, charted a sparer version of her martyrdom, but similarly concludes "in death chastity lives" - Prudentius' own ascetic lifestyle tempts one to think that he had a special admiration for unsullied maidens like Agnes and Eulalia.⁹⁷

Peristephanon XII describes, through the words of a guide, the celebrations surrounding the feast day of the apostles, Peter and Paul in Rome. It is, oddly, focused on a description of the churches built to honour the saints and on the joyful crowd celebrating their festival, rather than on descriptions of the martyrdom of the two apostles which, although the suffering of the saints is made clear, are only described briefly. Perhaps this poem was a way of Prudentius showing his Spanish audience how Christian communities could grow together as they joined in the celebration of the saints. Palmer plausibly suggests that this focus on Peter and Paul is due to the Spanish Pope Damasus having been involved in the construction of St Peter's basilica and the "princeps" who dedicated St. Paul's church being the Spanish Emperor Theodosius. Highlighting these achievements in far-off Rome would please the members of Prudentius' Spanish audience and encourage them to adopt the feast day of the two saints.⁹⁸ Prudentius impresses this upon them by concluding his poem with the advice of his guide to "return home and remember to honour this day of two festivals in the same way".⁹⁹

The last two Italian poems concern shrines which we can believe were visited by Prudentius, as in these verses he relates the emotional impact that the proximity of the remains of the saints made upon him. In both of these the saints' judgement and suffering follow the traditional *acta* format. *Peristephanon* XI honours a noted Roman martyr, Hippolytus, who died spectacularly when his body was torn apart by

⁹⁶ Edwards, *Death*, 213, quoted above (n.77) in connection with a similar eroticised account of Eulalia's death in *Pe. III*. Cf. Edwards, 183, on Vergil's eroticism of Dido's death in the *Aeneid*.

⁹⁷ Ambrose, *Hymnes*, 8, 378, line 29; *Pe. XIV* (CCSL 126: 388, line 99). The poem also contains a tirade against "the vanities of an inconstant world" - "vana saeculi mobilitas".

⁹⁸ Palmer, *Prudentius*, 276-7. There is no evidence that Saint Paul, who Romans 15. 25 and 28 expressed the desire to go to Spain, inspired any special devotion in Late Antique Hispania. Cf. Barnes, *Hagiography*, 31-5, who suggests that a letter, c.100AD, indicates that Paul not only went to "the limits of the West" (i.e. Hispania) but was executed there.

⁹⁹ *Pe. XII* (CCSL 126: 381, lines 65-6). "Tu domum reversus diem bifestum sic colas memento".

wild horses, and whose Roman tomb was already a centre for festival celebrations, as noted above. The tomb of Cassian (*Peristephanon* IX), a schoolmaster condemned to be killed by his own pupils with their sharpened *stili*, was situated in Imola, Northern Italy and seems to have been a place for more private devotions. Nevertheless, both poems are striking in structure as they centre around ekphrasis of paintings of the martyrs' deaths which Prudentius tells us he saw at the saints' tombs. These poems will be discussed later in Chapters Four and Five when we analyse the extent to which Prudentius drew upon his Roman experiences to inspire a specifically Hispanic audience.

Of the remaining three martyr poems, that of the third-century bishop Cyprian of Carthage (*Peristephanon* XIII) can be related to the Spanish group since his festival was already being celebrated in Hispania, as seen in the opening quotation in this chapter. Cyprian had also corresponded with Spanish bishops advising them on problems of idolatry and thus during his lifetime apparently had links with the church in Hispania. There were also *acta* on the saint's martyrdom, although Prudentius' story is somewhat confused having conflated this historical Cyprian with the mythical Cyprian of Antioch.

It is less easy to explain Prudentius' *Peristephanon* VII on Quirinus, who was, according to the poet, a martyr bishop burned in Siscia in Pannonia. His relics were translated to Rome in the fifth century and there is an image of him in the catacomb of St. Callixtus also dated to the fifth century.¹⁰⁰ An inscription exists, however, which may or may not be the work of Damasus.¹⁰¹ Therefore there may have been an earlier connection between Quirinus and Rome which might have piqued Prudentius' interest.¹⁰²

Peristephanon X on Romanus fits least well into the Hispania/Rome pattern of Prudentius' martyr works. Possibly it was never intended to be linked to the others, as it is far longer and more complex in structure. It also often appears in manuscripts situated separately from the other thirteen poems. It has been entitled in some manuscripts (by Prudentius or not) "contra gentiles dicta" and contains a long

¹⁰⁰ A. Baruffa, *The Catacombs of Callixtus* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), 71-2.

¹⁰¹ *Epigrammata Damasiana*, 64.

¹⁰² Palmer, *Prudentius*, at 263 theorises that Theodosius might have adopted Quirinus' cult after a victorious battle at Siscia.

denunciation against paganism similar to Prudentius' anti-pagan polemics, *Contra Symmachum* I and II.¹⁰³ It could therefore be seen as written with a similar purpose in mind, rather than specifically as a tribute to the martyrdom of Romanus.

The majority of the *Peristephanon* poems therefore had a powerful connection for Prudentius either with his homeland, Hispania, or with Italy, which he is known to have visited and which represented for him, in the form of Rome, the centre of the Christian world. Therefore it is plain that his martyr works were very special to him. Whether this fervour was felt by his fellow Spaniards, Christian and non-Christian, and manifested in their lives and worship cannot be taken for granted as we shall see in the next section.

V.Martyrs in Hispania: Evidential Texts and Material Culture.

So much of what we seem to know about martyr veneration in the late fourth and early fifth century in Hispania is dependent on the information in the *Peristephanon* poems. If these works had not existed, the literary and material evidence for the cult of the saints would leave much to be desired. Although, as a *caveat*, one must heed the words of Hippolyte Delehaye regarding the authenticity of his narratives: "Prudentius is sincere, honest; but who would ever think of treating his poems as an historian's text?"¹⁰⁴ In this section of the chapter I intend to seek out independent proofs which might indicate that the people of Hispania, during Prudentius' lifetime, were exposed to and/or acted upon influences which might encourage their belief in the power of the martyrs, and thus determine the extent to which his words might have fallen upon sympathetic ears. Evidence which might throw some light on the state of martyr worship in Hispania, before the probable public presentation of Prudentius' works as a whole around 404/5AD, takes the form both of texts and material remains. We shall take each in turn.

It is unknowable what hagiographical documents might have been available to Prudentius' Spanish audience. However, a strong case can be made for Hispano-Roman Christians, and even non-Christians, being familiar with the *Acta* of Fructuosus, Augurius and Eulogius of Tarraco. It was surely known to those living

¹⁰³ Bergman, *Prudentii Carmina*, XIII, notes that the seventh-century Ambrosian codex contains the title: *Sancti Romani martyris contra gentiles dicta*.

¹⁰⁴ Delehaye, *Legends*, 92, as translated by D. Attwater.

around Tarraco, where the three were burned in 259AD and where they lay buried in tombs which may have formed a centre for an early cult.¹⁰⁵ Since Prudentius' own work owes much to this *Acta*, it must have been circulating before he wrote on Fructuosus and his fellow martyrs, although the date of its actual composition is unknown. (Musurillo proposed a date shortly after the Peace of the Church, while Grig and Barnes suggest that the version which has come down to us was one which was "retouched" during the fourth century).¹⁰⁶ Further evidence for the spread of this text is provided by Augustine, who celebrated Fructuosus in a sermon of 396AD which makes clear his knowledge of the *Acta*.¹⁰⁷ Therefore since it had reached across to an audience in Africa, it is difficult to believe that it was not well-known in Hispania by then.

Other martyr narratives which might have been available to Hispano-Gallic individuals prior to Prudentius' verses are harder to pin down. Of the *Peristephanon* martyrs, Prudentius' is the first known written document to record the story of Eulalia, Emeterius and Chelidonius (and the Calagurris baptistery), and the Caesaraugusta Eighteen, as well as Cassian of Imola. The *Acta* of Vincent cannot be dated precisely and therefore it is not possible to tell if or how Prudentius based his narrative on an existing document.¹⁰⁸ However, Augustine, in a sermon dated c.410-412AD, records Vincent's *passio* being read out in church on his feast day.¹⁰⁹ There is, therefore, every reason to suppose that an earlier hagiographic text existed, which, again, may have been known to an audience in Hispania. Vincent, indeed, seems to have been on his way to becoming the most popular of the Spanish saints, with Augustine devoting four extant sermons to him, and Paulinus of Nola including him in his late fourth-century praise to shining stars of the West like Ambrose, Martin and Delphinus.¹¹⁰ "And not less shines out the favour of the Western lands, Ambrose

¹⁰⁵ See 116-118 below for further discussion of cult site.

¹⁰⁶ Musurillo, *Acts*, xxxii; Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 39; Barnes, *Hagiography*, 93.

¹⁰⁷ Augustine, *Sermones*, 273.3. "Ego non colo Fructuosum, sed Deum colo, quem colit et Fructuosus" (PL 38: 1249); Cf, Musurillo, *Acts*, 12, 178, 15-6, "Ego Fructuosum non colo, sed ipsum colo quem et Fructuosus colit".

¹⁰⁸ Palmer, *Prudentius*, 245.

¹⁰⁹ Augustine, *Sermones*, 275 (PL 38: 1254-5): "beati Vincenti gloriosa passio legeretur".

¹¹⁰ Augustine, *Sermones*, 274-7 (PL 38:1252-68); Paulinus, *Carmina*, 19 (CSEL 30: 123, lines 152-156).

of Latium, Vincent who came from Spain, (while) Gaul took Martin, (and) Aquitania Delphinus”.¹¹¹

Early documentary confirmation for the worship of saints whom Prudentius records in his hagiographical tour of Hispania in *Peristephanon* IV is (virtually) non-existent. Felix, Zoillus, Acisclus, and Cucufas leave no early textual trail, although Cassian of Tingis is credited with an *Acta*, considered unreliable, which purports to be the record of his martyrdom.¹¹² He is reputed to have been the *notarius* who took down the details of the trial of Saint Marcellus in Tingis.¹¹³ However, there is a notable exception to this lacuna in the case of Justus and Pastor of Complutum, whose worship appears to be verified by Paulinus. In his poem, *Carmina* 31, Paulinus bemoans the death of his longed-for son, Celsus. Although composed as a *consolatio* for relatives on the death of their son, also called Celsus, this poem relates the manner in which Paulinus and his Spanish wife, Therasia, buried their child. He states: “in the city of Complutum we interred him close by the tomb of the martyrs with whom he forms an alliance”.¹¹⁴ Paulinus hoped that “since the blood of the saints is nearby, he [the child] will besprinkle our souls when they are in the [post-mortem] fire”.¹¹⁵ Therefore, he believes that the association of the child with the martyrs will help to bring salvation to Paulinus and Therasia after their deaths. Since Paulinus moved to Gaul in c.395AD this burial must have taken place a few years before. It must be assumed that the martyrs Paulinus referred to were Justus and Pastor, but even if they were not, Paulinus’ verses prove that in the latter part of the fourth century in Hispania, there were those, albeit committed Christians like Paulinus, who seemed to believe in the salvatory power of the martyrs.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Paulinus, *Carmina*, 19 (CSEL 30: 123, lines 152-4). “Nec minor occiduis effulsit gratia terris, Ambrosius Latio, Vincentius extat Hiberis, Galia Martinum, Delphinum Aquitania sumpsit”.

¹¹² Musurillo, *Acts*, xxxviii; *Acta Martyrium* (ed.), P. Ruinart (Regensburg: G. Joseph Manz, 1859), 345, ‘Passio S. Cassiani Tingitani Martyris’.

¹¹³ Musurillo, *Acts*, 18, 250-9., recensions M and N. Marcellus was either judged and executed in Tingis or judged in Tingis and executed in Leon in Galicia. The latter recension, although a less reliable, does provide a connection with Peninsula Hispania for this Cassian. See 114-5 below re Marialba.

¹¹⁴ Paulinus, *Carmina*, 31 (CSEL 30: 329, lines 607-8). “Quem Conplutensi mandavimus urbe propinquis coniunctum tumuli foedere martyribus”.

¹¹⁵ Paulinus, *Carmina*, 31 (CSEL 30: 329, lines 609-10). “Ut de vicino sanctorum sanguine ducat, quo nostras illo spargat in igne animas”.

¹¹⁶ Augustine, *De Cura pro Mortuis Gerenda ad Paulinum*, 1 (PL 40: 621). Paulinus seems to have had later doubts about burial ‘ad sanctos’, since he wrote to Augustine, ostensibly on behalf of a woman, Flora, regarding whether it was beneficial after death to be buried at the memorial of a saint.

The only other saint of the *Peristephanon* who was commemorated in authentic early *Acta* was Cyprian, although Prudentius' version heavily embroiders the basic story with details from other sources.¹¹⁷ It is plausible that the original could have circulated in Hispania following Cyprian's death, especially if, as proposed above, the bishop had an affiliation with the country. With regard to the remaining foreign martyrs in the *Peristephanon*, Prudentius appears to be intent upon introducing new saints into the purview of the Spanish. While the poet may have been aware of them, it seems doubtful that their cults obtained any foothold in Hispania until later. Agnes and Lawrence were saints of Rome, commemorated by Damasus and Ambrose, but one cannot assume a cult-following for them in Hispania. Even in Africa where Lawrence was known, Augustine complained of the smallness of the congregation which gathered for his feast day, contrasting it with the saint's fame in Rome.¹¹⁸ Lawrence was not celebrated in Hispania until the mid-fifth century and Agnes does not appear to have entered the written record there until after the Visigothic era.¹¹⁹ Similar considerations apply to Hippolytus who, as we have seen, was venerated in Rome, but who does not appear in Spanish texts until the seventh century.¹²⁰ Prudentius' source for Quirinus' narrative may have been a no longer extant Latin *Acta* or possibly Jerome's continuation of an early fourth-century work in Greek by Eusebius.¹²¹ Eusebius, again, produced a narrative on Romanus, but a Latin passion also seems to have been in circulation which may be the source for Prudentius' work.¹²² However, once again there is no extant textual proof that either Quirinus or Romanus would have been known to the Spanish in Hispania before Prudentius brought the saints' names to their notice.

We are thus left with only limited written evidence for the veneration of the *Peristephanon* martyrs in Hispania. No church calendars survive from Spain dated

¹¹⁷ Musurillo, *Acts*, 11, xxx-xxxi and 168-75; Delehay, *Legends*, 89-90; Barnes, *Hagiography*, 77-85 all state that the *Acta* was put together from separate more-or-less contemporary records. Prudentius introduced elements from the story of Cyprian of Antioch and other martyrs who died in the same persecution as the African Cyprian. (See Palmer, *Prudentius*, 235-6).

¹¹⁸ Augustine, *Sermones* 303.1 (PL 38: 1393-95).

¹¹⁹ García Rodríguez, *El Culto*, 173-4.

¹²⁰ Eugenius, *Sancti Eugenii III episcopi Toletum*, Ep. 3 (PL 87: 412), see Chapter 4, 148.

¹²¹ Palmer, *Prudentius*, 236-7.

¹²² Palmer, *Prudentius*, 246-7, 264.

before the end of the fifth or early sixth century.¹²³ And if they did exist they might well only show what feast days the church considered should be observed rather than what was actually happening on the ground – as was witnessed by Augustine and his lacklustre audience for St. Lawrence’s day. The *Hieronymian Martyrology* is sometimes cited as a way of determining early martyr worship in Hispania.¹²⁴ However, this calendar of feast days, falsely attributed to Jerome, was in its earliest form written in Italy in the second half of the fifth century and in its extant form not until the sixth century in Gaul. Thus it serves little purpose in revealing Spanish saints’ cults at the turn of the fourth century.

Beyond the confines of the *Peristephanon* Castillo Maldonado presents a case for the saints Justa and Rufina of Seville as being pre-fourth century Spanish authentic martyrs, based on “indisputably historical elements” included in their much later *passio*, although he is unable to find any attestation of their cult before the Visigothic period.¹²⁵ He concludes, somewhat obviously, that Prudentius did not include them in the *Peristephanon* either because he did not know of them or because there was no martyrial cult for them at the time.¹²⁶

There is, nevertheless, more certain evidence that the Christians of Hispania were being offered martyrial material earlier than Prudentius’ verses. This comes in the form of the text ‘*de martyro Esiae prophetae*’ written by the bishop of Lisbon, Potamius, in the mid-fourth century.¹²⁷ Although its subject is not a Christian martyr in the traditional sense, in this narrative Isaiah also suffers condemnation, torture and a painful execution at the hands of a ruthless judge because of his belief in Christ, as evidenced by his prophesy of Christ’s coming. The source of Potamius’ text seems to have been an apocryphal work, the ‘Ascension of Isaiah’. The first part of this, the martyrdom of the prophet, is probably a first-century AD Jewish work, while the second concerns Isaiah’s ascension and vision of heaven and is later Christian.¹²⁸

¹²³ H.Delehay, ‘Le Calendrier lapidaire de Carmona’, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 31 (1912), 319-21. This is the incomplete Calendar of Carmona; J.Vives (ed.) *ICERV* (Barcelona: A.G. Ponsa, 1969) 112-4, no. 333.

¹²⁴ E.g Palmer, *Prudentius* 265, 267-8.

¹²⁵ Castillo Maldonado, ‘*Angelorum participes*’, 161.

¹²⁶ Castillo Maldonado, *Los Mártires*, 408. “No pertenecen al corpus martirial documentado por Prudencio (ya sea por desconocimiento del autor o porque, ...no tenían culto martirial)”.

¹²⁷ *Potamii Episcopi* (CCSL 69A: 198-203).

¹²⁸ M.Knibb, ‘Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah’ in J. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol.2 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 143-76, at 143, 149.

Potamius' narrative centres on the martyrdom itself, but introduces new elements - describing in more detail and with more savagery the torture and death of Isaiah which was only briefly reported in the Apocrypha. In this Potamius prefigures Prudentius' treatment of Fructuosus' *Acta* and the poet's heightened version of that saint's suffering. The essence of Potamius' narrative is the grisly gusto with which he describes how Isaiah's head was cut in two with a saw, and then how his body was then sawn into two pieces.

Conti assumes that when Prudentius refers to Isaiah, 'who was cut apart', as a companion in heaven for Vincent in his *Peristephanon* V, this was based on the poet's knowledge of the Apocrypha.¹²⁹ However, while a well-connected ecclesiastical figure like Potamius might have had access to the Apocrypha, it seems more likely that Prudentius would know Potamius' version since the bishop's see had been in Hispania and his work is likely to have been circulated there.¹³⁰ There is further possible evidence of this in his martyr poems on Cassian and Hippolytus which show surprising resemblances to Potamius' Isaiah text: having explained how the teeth of the saw opened up the skin and tissue of Isaiah's head Potamius writes that this makes "Hebrew letters of the head" (*hebraeas capitis litteras*) and Prudentius similarly describes how the pupils of Cassian torture the saint by writing on his body with their sharp metal *stili*.¹³¹ Moreover, the effect of the attack in Potamius' text is that "streams [are] flowing from the purple source as the loosened veins [spilt their contents]" (*fontis fluenta purpurei laxatis venarum lapsibus*).¹³² Later "veins are hidden by the gushing of blood" (*tecta gurgite sanguinis venarum*).¹³³ These lines can be compared to Prudentius' description of the bleeding Cassian, where blood follows the open passages from the sources in the veins within (*sanguis ab interno venarum fonte patentes vias secutus*).¹³⁴ There is also a likeness in the way that Isaiah's body is "divided limb from limb" (*membratim corporis divisa*) with Prudentius' description of Hippolytus' "*membra*" which were similarly

¹²⁹ Potamius, *The Life and Works of Potamius of Lisbon* (ed. and tr.) M.Conti (Steenbrugis: Brepols, 1998), 38: *Pe. V* (CCSL 126: 312, line 524), "sectoque Eseiae".

¹³⁰ Conti, *Potamius of Lisbon*, 11, suggests that Potamius also was probably of Iberian origin. At 33, Conti proposes that Potamius intended to attract the attention of a popular audience, (which probably included one in Hispania,) with the sensational language used in *De Isaia* (sic).

¹³¹ *Potamius Episcopi* (CCSL 69A:201, 23); *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 327, lines 51-4).

¹³² *Potamii Episcopi* (CCSL 69A:201, lines 26-7).

¹³³ *Potamius Episcopi* (CCSL 69A:201, lines 28-9).

¹³⁴ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 328, lines 89-90).

torn apart.¹³⁵ If Prudentius had read Potamius' text on Isaiah, it is possible that this may have been a source of literary inspiration for the poet, in its topic and language, closer to home than the works of better-known writers on martyr cults.

And if Prudentius had read Potamius' text, the possibility must exist that other Hispano-Roman Christians would have had access to this accolade to martyrdom by a significant figure of the church. There is confirmation that other Christian Spaniards knew something of the story of Isaiah's martyrdom as Priscillian also makes reference to "Isaiah who was sawn in two halves" – "Eseiam fuisse dissectum" in his *Liber de Fide et Apocryphis*, although it is feasible that his source might have been the original text.¹³⁶ Potamius' and Priscillian's interest in the 'martyr' Isaiah confirms a pre-Prudentian attraction in Hispania to martyr cults and their texts.

It is Priscillian himself who next figures in our textual martyrial record of Hispania. Although again not fitting the conventional idea of a Christian martyr there is no doubt that in the eyes of many, both in Hispania and in Southern Gaul, he achieved martyr status. His execution, together with some of his followers, on the orders of Maximus in Trier in 385AD shocked the followers of this ascetic and charismatic religious leader. Although he was condemned ostensibly for sorcery, in truth the ecclesiastical and secular Establishment regarded him as a dangerous heretic, with beliefs akin to Manicheism.¹³⁷ After his death, according to Sulpicius Severus, the 'heresy' was not suppressed, but Priscillian became revered as a martyr.¹³⁸ His body, together with those of his companions, who had come from both Hispania and Southern Gaul, was taken back to Hispania, probably to Galicia. Here he was given an impressive funeral and Severus tells us oaths were solemnly sworn at his shrine.¹³⁹ The Council of Toledo, in 400AD, attempted to squash the Priscillian cult which still had support in Spain, particularly in Galicia. There were bishops present, however, who still refused to condemn Priscillian and his writings;

¹³⁵ *Potamii Episcopi* (CCSL 69A: 203,39); *Pe.XI* (CCSL 126: 374, lines 131-2.) The scene at Hippolytus' death is of "limbs torn asunder and lying scattered in disorder" – "cernere erat ruptis compagibus ordine nullo membra ...sparsa iacere situs".

¹³⁶ Conti, *Priscillian*, 86, 71-2; Knibb, 'Martyrdom', 149. Justin Martyr and Tertullian also knew of the tradition that Isaiah met his death by being sawn in half.

¹³⁷ Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila*, 20-4, and 47-51, 55-6, regarding the specific denial of Manicheism in Priscillian's first tractate.

¹³⁸ Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* II, 51 (CSEL 1: 104, lines 7-8).

¹³⁹ Sulpicius Severus, *Chron.* II, 51 (CSEL 1: 104-5, line 8).

one of them, Herenas, exclaimed that Priscillian was “a catholic and holy martyr, who had been orthodox to the end and had been persecuted by the bishops”.¹⁴⁰ Prudentius was reticent in his writing regarding Priscillian, although as suggested in Chapter Two, he might have been sympathetic to Priscillian’s ascetic lifestyle. However, it is also worth considering whether Prudentius’ list of acceptable martyrs might have functioned as a counterblast to a martyr, worshipped in Hispania and Gaul, whom he saw as spurious.

One of the ways in which the true believer in the benefits of martyr worship could show his or her allegiance was to perform a pilgrimage. Prudentius, as we know from his verses, journeyed to Italy and visited the tombs of martyrs - although a pilgrimage may not necessarily have been the only reason for his visit.¹⁴¹ He probably also worshipped at the shrines in Hispania mentioned in the *Peristephanon*. Hispania’s most noted fourth-century pilgrim was Egeria, who recorded her travels to the sites in the Holy Land for her community back home.¹⁴² It seems likely that this was located in Galicia rather than in Southern Gaul, which has also been suggested.¹⁴³ She followed an ascetic lifestyle, and the community seems to have been female, since she addresses its members as “ladies and reverend sisters”.¹⁴⁴ In view of its probable location in Galicia which was such a significant centre for followers of Priscillian, there is the intriguing possibility that it was a Priscillianist-style group. Melania the Elder also travelled East “to visit the saints” in the fourth century, but, as Palladius notes, although she was “a Spaniard by origin,” she “afterwards belonged to Rome”, and thus her actions cannot really be judged as typical of a Christian living in Hispania.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Vives, *Concilio de Toledo* 1, 31, “Priscillianum catholicum sanctumque martyrem clamassent atque ipse utque ad finem catholicum esse dixisset, persecutionem ab episcopis passum”.

¹⁴¹ There is an implication in *Pe. IX* that other affairs took him to Rome. (CCSL 126: 329, lines 101-5).

¹⁴² Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 91-147. The seventh-century Galician hermit, Valerius, describes her reaching “most holy places of the birth, passion and resurrection of the Lord, and of the bodies of countless holy martyrs”, 174. Egeria refers, for example, to visiting the tombs of Thecla (23.5,122) Helpidius (20.5,118), and Thomas (19.3,115).

¹⁴³ Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 3, regarding her putative Spanish origin; contra H. Sivan, ‘Who was Egeria? Piety and pilgrimage in the age of Gratian’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 81.1 (1988), 59-72. Sivan suggests that she came from Arles based on her specific geographic reference to the Rhone, 64-5.

¹⁴⁴ Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, e.g. 20.5, 118: “dominae venerabiles sorores”.

¹⁴⁵ Lowther Clarke, *The Lausiaca History*, 147, XLVI. It is also difficult to categorise Poemenia, a pilgrim to Egypt and Palestine, as Spanish, because of a tenuous connection between her and Theodosius’ family, and it is also unclear whether her journey started in Hispania or Constantinople.

Another Galician, Hydatius, who is better known as a chronicler, also recorded a *peregrinatio* to the Holy Land in c.406-7AD, when he was very young – a mere “infantulus”. Here he visited Jerusalem and met the holy John of Jerusalem, Eulogius of Caesarea, Theophilus of Alexandria and also Jerome, who was “distinguished in all things” (*praecipuus ... in cunctis*).¹⁴⁶ Hydatius says that he was a “*pupillus*” which can be translated as an orphan or ward. If this was so, one assumes that the pilgrimage party included a relative such as an uncle or a grandfather from Hispania. However, the word “*pupillus*” in the Spanish seventh century could mean no more than a small boy, and therefore Hydatius may have been with a parent from his Galician home town of “*Lemica civitate*”.¹⁴⁷ Although the Spanish pilgrimages we know of are limited in number, it seems significant that, with the exception of Prudentius’ trip, those mentioned above took place to the Holy Land rather than to Rome. Perhaps the concept of pilgrimage to Rome had not established itself in the Hispanic religious psyche in same way as pilgrimage to the Holy Land sites had (as popularised by Constantine and his mother and confirmed in the writing of Eusebius). Hence, perhaps, we have Prudentius’ aim in reinforcing Rome as a divine centre for Christian martyr worship.

The purpose of the pilgrimage was to be close to the relics of the martyrs and other holy figures. Although the peregrinations of relics such as those provided by Ambrose have been well recorded we have little written information as to whether such items were being sent into Hispania in the fourth and early fifth century. At the beginning of the fourth century a noblewoman living in Carthage, who was apparently Spanish, achieved some notoriety for her practice of kissing a martyr’s bone before Eucharist.¹⁴⁸ However, as Wisniewski suggests, this was a report written by Optatus of Milevis in the 360’s and may be an exaggeration based on practices contemporary to Optatus himself.¹⁴⁹ We do know that Orosius intended to bring relics of Saint Stephen back to the Spanish mainland from the Holy land in 416AD, albeit only making it as far as Minorca in the Balearic Islands, where Stephen’s cult was later established. This happened shortly after Prudentius’ putative demise, so

See R. Teja, ‘Mujeres hispanas en Oriente en época teodosiana’ in Teja y Pérez, *La Hispania de Teodosio*, 275-84, at 276, 278-9.

¹⁴⁶ Burgess, *Hydatius*, 72.29-34; 80.12-13.

¹⁴⁷ Burgess, *Hydatius*, 72. 15, and 4 re Isidore’s seventh-century definition of *pupillus*.

¹⁴⁸ Brown, *Cult*, 34.

¹⁴⁹ R. Wisniewski, ‘Lucilla and the Bone: Remarks on an Early Testimony to the Cult of Relics’, *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 4.1 (2011), 157-161.

we cannot say for sure that there was an active cult-following for Stephen in Hispania during the poet's lifetime. However, Prudentius' work, *Tituli Historiarum*, which consisted of verses to be displayed under pictures in a Christian structure, contains a description of the *passio* of Stephen by stoning.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, we do know that the poet had made a contribution to the preparation of the ground for the reception of the saint's relics.

Southern Gaul is more forthcoming than Hispania in providing information on the fourth-century transport of relics. By 395AD Paulinus had departed from Hispania to build a shrine to his special saint, Felix, in Italy, and had become involved in an elite exchange network for holy relics. He wrote to his friend, Sulpicius Severus, that he had sent fragments of the True Cross to him to be placed in the church Severus had built for his ascetic Christian community at Primuliacum, west of Toulouse. Paulinus also says that these can lie in company with sacred ashes from the remains of apostles and saints which Severus has already acquired, and that together they will bring the healing powers of the Lord to the community.¹⁵¹ Further evidence of relic cults in Gaul is provided by Vigilantius, who came from Calagurris in the Pyrenean region. His polemic against the adoration of "a piece of dust wrapped in a linen cloth" provoked the fury of Jerome who attacked him in *Contra Vigilantium*.¹⁵² Hunter suggests that Vigilantius' views were, in fact, common among the conservative clergy of Gaul at a time when this form of piety was not necessarily accepted. Since Vigilantius is said to have been a presbyter in Barcelona, perhaps we can assume that his attitude was not uncommon there.¹⁵³

Without Prudentius' poems we thus have rather patchy textual evidence for martyr veneration among Hispano-Gallic Christian communities in the late fourth and early fifth century. We know of few other written works on martyrs which might have been known to both Christians and non-Christians. However, since knowledge of the

¹⁵⁰ *Tituli Hist.*, XLIV, Passio Stefani (CCSL 126: 399, lines 177-80).

¹⁵¹ Paulinus, *Epistulae*, Ep. 32 (CSEL 29: 282-4, lines 7-8). Sulpicius Severus was unable to obtain Martin's relics. The saint was Clarus who was close to Martin; B.Beaujard, *Le culte des saints en Gaule: les premiers temps. D'Hilaire de Poitiers à la fin du Vie siècle* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2000), 75, 77-8.

¹⁵² D. Hunter, 'Vigilantius of Calagurris and Victricius of Rouen: Ascetics, Relics, and Clerics in Late Roman Gaul', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 7.3 (1999), 401-3, 424. Unfortunately Vigilantius' original is lost.

¹⁵³ Gennadius, *de viris inlustribus*, 74, 35; *Pe. VI* (CCSL 126: 319, lines 136-141). Since Prudentius specifies that Fructuosus and his companions have requested that their ashes be gathered up for burial in one place, he may have been sympathetic to Vigilantius' views.

Spanish ‘very special dead’ such as Vincent and Fructuosus had spread to North Africa, and while in Hispania, Prudentius had heard of martyrdom in Italy, we can suppose that there may have been stories about martyrs circulating among these regions. The textual evidence for pilgrimage to martyr tombs from Hispania is slender as is that of relic cults. Existing secondary scholarship has tended to neglect the archaeological record for evidence concerning martyr cults in Hispania; therefore, atypically, with regard to Prudentius’ martyr poetry, I shall now look at the material culture for signs that he was not alone in promoting ‘the cult of the very special dead’.

In theory archaeology should add to the corpus of knowledge we possess regarding martyr veneration in Hispania. In practice insecure dating and questions over the identity and function of physical remains make this process less than straightforward, as we shall see. There is, at least, clarity over the function of the sarcophagi which show the earliest images of martyrs to be found in Hispania, even if the apparent religious affiliation of their occupants may owe more to social pressures or fashion than to genuine Christian beliefs and practices. The saints which appear initially, however, are apostle-martyrs rather than those who died in later persecutions. The apostles celebrated by Prudentius in *Peristephanon* XII, Peter and Paul, feature on Christian-themed sarcophagi which started to appear in Hispania in the early fourth century. There are ten known examples of this, some of which date to as early as c.300-315AD, according to Sotomayor.¹⁵⁴ Paul’s image is less in evidence than Peter’s in Hispania, with only one extant example of a sarcophagus showing him together with Peter being judged by the Emperor Nero. Like those of Peter, this image is a Roman export from c.315-330AD.¹⁵⁵ However, since these sarcophagi all seem to have been exported from Roman workshops, it is possible that they were chosen based on the prestige derived from these imported items and the beauty of their workmanship, rather than because of any affinity with the iconography of the object itself. In view of Prudentius’ later poetic exhortation to celebrate these two saints’ feast days in Hispania, the significance of their appearance on the sarcophagi should perhaps not be overstated.

¹⁵⁴ M.Sotomayor, ‘Palaeo-Christian Funerary Sculpture’, *Classical Folia*, 23 (1969), 115-38, 118-23.

¹⁵⁵ Paul’s persona vis-a-vis Hispania may have been that of a teacher rather than a martyr. Pacianus advises learning from the writings of the apostles and quotes, for example, from Paul’s words in *De paenitentibus* VII (CCSL 69B: 21-23).

By the later fourth century local Spanish workshops also started to produce sarcophagi. It has been persuasively proposed, by Schlunk, that one of these, from Quintanabureba in Burgos, does show the image of a martyr: Saint Perpetua.¹⁵⁶ The extant *Passio* of the saint records how she had a vision, while imprisoned, of a ladder with metal weapons attached rising to the heavens. At the foot of it lay a dragon. Perpetua placed her foot on the dragon and together with another prisoner, Saturus, climbed past these dangers to the heavenly garden above.¹⁵⁷ The sarcophagus depicts a similar scene. A ladder with spikes attached stands over a sinuous creature which writhes beneath, while two figures are shown about to climb to the heavens above, represented by two stars. This sarcophagus provides an image for the informed viewer of a martyr's vision of the suffering she/he must be prepared to go through before attaining the joys of heaven - a suffering which took its literary form in the poetry of Prudentius.

The portable images of gods which had been a feature of private pagan worship do not seem to have had a Christian iconographical equivalent in Hispania by the early fifth century.¹⁵⁸ However, fourth-century mementos such as the figured gold glass bases of vessels which depicted the image of Agnes in the pious *orans* position functioned as a means of protection for the Christians of Rome, and it is possible that the extant material culture of Hispania reveals the use of comparable personal martyrial prophylactics.¹⁵⁹ The Hispano-Romans may, nevertheless, have organized private ways of worshipping martyrs, away from the shrines of the more public urban cemeteries. A handful of fourth-century and early fifth-century villas have mausolea associated with them which have attracted the attention of archaeologists since they possess features which hint at functions connected with martyr veneration. These sites have already been noted in Chapter Two where I have raised doubts in several cases as to whether all of these mausolea were in fact Christian.¹⁶⁰ I will now

¹⁵⁶ H.Schlunk, 'Zu den Fruhchristlichen Sarkophagen aus der Bureba (Prov.Burgos)', *Madridrer Mitteilungen*, 6 (1965), 139-66.

¹⁵⁷ Musurillo, *Acts*, 8.4, 111.

¹⁵⁸ Undated examples of Lares, for example, are listed in A.García y Bellido, *Esculturas romanas de España y Portugal*, Vol. I, (Madrid: CSIC, 1949), 104-5, nos. 98-100 and Vol.II, 81, figs. 98-100.

¹⁵⁹ Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 79-80 on 'Agnes' mementos; as exemplified by a fragment of glass, found in a Córdoba necropolis, incised with a chi-rho and an arm raised orant-style, and having a possible liturgical or private use. It is dated to the fourth/early fifth century. Sánchez Ramos, *Corduba*, 29, fig.1; cf. Fragments of glass illustrated possibly with biblical scenes were also found at El Val, see Chapter 2, 69, n.137.

¹⁶⁰ Chapter 2, 67-71.

suspend these reservations momentarily and discuss further the aspects which may point to them as foci for relic cults active during the lifetime of Prudentius.

Hispanic evidence tying mausolea structures to martyr veneration is thin. The octagonal mausoleum at Las Vegas de Pueblanueva, Toledo, contained three Christian sarcophagi located in a subterranean crypt; the structure was entered from the west and opposite to it on the eastern wall was a cordoned-off niche or chamber which, since the burials were in the crypt below, may have had a ritual purpose that was perhaps linked to a martyr cult.¹⁶¹ The mausoleum at La Alberca villa (Murcia) was apparently exceptional, being a double-storied and buttressed structure with a crypt on the lower level containing four burials. Structural similarities to the important martyrium of Saint Anastasius in Marusinac (Dalmatia) dated to the fourth century, have led to the suggestion that the La Alberca building also had a martyrial function with relics being located on the upper floor, although there is no direct archaeological evidence for this proposition.¹⁶² La Cocosa (Badajoz) also possessed a mausoleum, dated to the late fourth or early fifth century, located 250 kilometres from the villa. It was east-west oriented and had an unusual internal tetraconch shape and contained a fine single marble sarcophagus, but once again there is little to justify Palol's proposal that this was a martyrium, or even for that matter Christian.¹⁶³ It is difficult to see from the above particulars that any of these structures can be securely identified as anything more than grandiose mausolea which boosted the prestige of the estate's family - and which may not even have been Christian in affiliation.

At Marialba near Legio an unfinished early fourth-century apsed building near a late Roman villa was modified and converted to funerary use, apparently in the late fourth or early fifth century, by the insertion of thirteen well-constructed graves in its apse.¹⁶⁴ By the thirteenth century these were said to be those of Marcellus, (the martyr we have already met above in connection with Cassian of Tingis) and of his

¹⁶¹ Bowes, *Hispania*, 210-1; Bowes, *Private Worship*, 137; T. Hauschild, 'Das Mausoleum bei Las Vegas de Pueblo Nueva', *Madridrer Mitteilungen*, 10 (1969), 296-316.

¹⁶² Palol, *Arqueología Cristiana*, 106-16; T. Hauschild, 'Das "Martyrium" von la Alberca (Prov. Murcia)', *Madridrer Mitteilungen*, 12 (1971), 170-194; Bowes, *Private Worship*, at 142 suggests the importance of Marusinac might have influenced a Spanish aristocrat to build a mausoleum which evoked that building.

¹⁶³ Palol, *Arqueología Cristiana*, 136-43; Bowes, *Private Worship*, 137-8.

¹⁶⁴ Bowes, *Private Worship*, at 152, considers that this points to a martyrial project by the estate owner.

twelve children.¹⁶⁵ This legend may have bolstered Marialba's status as a martyrium and attracted later (medieval) burials which are located close by, but there is no archaeology which demonstrates that this was its early function.

Bowes accepts a martyrial function for Marialba and also assigns firm private martyrial status to one other site, the Villa Fortunatus which lies between Tarragona and Zaragoza. The chi-rho found here in a fourth-century mosaic may confirm Christian ownership at that time, although as discussed in Chapter Two it is feasible to question this conclusion.¹⁶⁶ It seems that during the fifth century, possibly in the first decades, a small 'crypt' was inserted into one of the rooms accessed by a small flight of steps, which it has been suggested was to hold a reliquary.¹⁶⁷ If, as is possible, this re-construction occurred early in the fifth century, we would have the only archaeologically attested private relic cult site known to have existed at the time when Prudentius was alive – and also one located in Tarraconensis. Chavarría, however, has challenged Bowes' proposal that this space was part of a conversion to a church.¹⁶⁸ We, therefore, again have a site whose martyrial status is insecure.

It is apparent that there is little in the material culture to support signs of early martyr veneration at rural sites in Hispania or Southern Gaul.¹⁶⁹ Even where villa structures can be confirmed as later conversions to churches, it does not follow that the original function of the building might have been a centre for a martyr cult. In the main, therefore, evidence for rural relic cults is archaeologically possible rather than demonstrable. Urban sites, however, seem to provide some physical signs that martyrs had a presence in the lives of Hispano-Gallic Romans of the late fourth and early fifth century. In discussing these I shall now focus on the towns of mainland

¹⁶⁵ Castillo Maldonado, '*Angelorum participes*,' 161-2. In spite of acknowledging the legendary nature of this story, Castillo Maldonado refers to Marcellus' martyrium at Marialba.

¹⁶⁶ See Chapter 2, 69-70 for my suggestion that the mosaic chi-rho need not show a Christian villa-owner.

¹⁶⁷ C. Godoy Fernández, *Arqueología y liturgia: iglesias hispánicas (siglo IV al VIII)* (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 1995), 230; Chavarría, *El Final*, 146; Bowes, *Private Worship*, 133-5.

¹⁶⁸ Bowes, *Private Worship*, 134, n.36. Chavarría dates the church to the sixth century; Chavarría, *El Final*, 144-146; see Sales Carbonell, *Las construcciones*, 87-93, for further discussion of the site.

¹⁶⁹ Balmelle, *Les Demeures*, reveals in her catalogue of Late Roman villas in Aquitania that necropoleis found at these villas could be dated no earlier than the Merovingian period or Early Middle Ages. Although some sites later became churches, there is no physical indication of prior Christian cult activity; Sulpicius' rural cult centre at Primuliacum was probably near Narbonne but no physical remains of this have been found, C. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his Hagiographer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 30.

Hispania and Southern Gaul praised by Prudentius in his martyrial survey of *Peristephanon* IV.

Two sites which have been subject to extensive archaeological exploration are the necropoleis containing the putative resting places of Fructuosus and his companions in Tarragona, and Eulalia in Mérida. As we shall see Prudentius' poems have themselves, however, led to a degree of text-led conjecture regarding the final resting-places of these martyrs in the excavations.

In the 1920's and 30's a site situated by the river Francolí to the west of the Roman city walls of Tarraco was excavated by Serra Vilaró.¹⁷⁰ While generally called the Paleo-Christian necropolis, over two thousand burials, both Christian and non-Christian, were found, with a further thousand being excavated subsequently in the surrounding areas.¹⁷¹ These dated from the third to the fifth century and beyond, although the earliest secure dating found *in situ* for a Christian burial comes from 393AD.¹⁷² Later a large basilica, with three naves and containing burials, was built over part of the necropolis. This, according to del Amo, dated to the later fifth century, although more recently López Vilar has suggested a date closer to 400AD.¹⁷³ Serra Vilaró was set upon discovering the tombs of Fructuosus, Augurius and Eulogius, and argued that he had found a sepulchre (number 24 in his records) which probably was the tomb of the martyrs. This supposition was based on its central position and the removal, attributed to pious motives, of marble plates from the walls of the tomb. Also, significantly for us, he cited the resemblance between the tomb and Prudentius' description of it in Fructuosus' poem. Del Amo pointed out, however, that the tomb of a child occupied a similar position to tomb 24 and also that a number of other tombs in the necropolis had been similarly despoiled.¹⁷⁴ Since Prudentius only referred to a "*cavo...marmore*" (a marble cavity) in his poem, this description could apply to many other tombs at the site.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, Serra

¹⁷⁰ M. Del Amo, *Estudio crítico de la necrópolis paleocristiana de Tarragona* (Tarragona: Exma. Diputació Provincial de Tarragona, 1979). Del Amo re-examined the surviving evidence of the Serra Vilaró excavation, which had focused on finding Fructuosus' tomb, and provided fuller clarification of the our understanding of the necropolis.

¹⁷¹ J. López Vilar, *Les basíliques paleocristianes del suburbi occidental de Tarraco* (Tarragona: Institut Català d'Arqueologia Clàssica, 2006), 304.

¹⁷² Del Amo, *necrópolis*, especially 278-85 re dating; Vives, *ICERV* 189, 61.

¹⁷³ Del Amo, *necrópolis*, 284; Lopez Vilar in *Basíliques*, at 304, is closer to Serra Vilaró's dating.

¹⁷⁴ Del Amo, *necrópolis*, 243, 276-7.

¹⁷⁵ *Pe. VI* (CCSL 126: 319, lines 140, 141).

Vilaró's ascription looks inconclusive at best and the location of Fructuosus' tomb remains unknown.

It seems probable that the basilica at this necropolis was built in honour of the three saints, as it has produced a fragment of an inscription dated to the fifth century reading '[Fru]ctuosi, Au[gurii et Eulogii]', which seems to commemorate them.¹⁷⁶ It is unlikely that this was an actual epitaph – Vives thought it pertained to an altar table or some sort of memorial.¹⁷⁷ There is, after all, the problem of where the remains had lain between their death in 259AD and the erection of the basilica. Perhaps Prudentius did know of a marble chamber where the three were buried.¹⁷⁸ Based on the necropolis excavations, whether we can assess the extent to which the martyrs were venerated during Prudentius' lifetime does depend to some extent on the dating of the basilica which, as stated above, is disputed. It may have been earlier than the mid-fifth century, although I am reluctant to prefer textual over archaeological evidence. In view of Prudentius' propensity for hyperbole, it is likely that had he known of a martyrial basilica he would have mentioned it in his poem.

More recent excavations at a short distance north of the original basilica have revealed a smaller basilica containing around 200 tombs, which is considered to date to the first half of the fifth century.¹⁷⁹ This seems to have been connected to a group of buildings with some religious function, arguably monastic, attracted by the southern necropolis. These structures include a fourth-century villa which it is hypothesised may have maintained the religious complex.¹⁸⁰ This newer excavation seems to highlight how the already substantial necropolis grew in importance. The original (possibly Paleo-Christian) necropolis had been densely populated with tombs, often superimposed upon one another.¹⁸¹ Some were grand – sarcophagi and mausolea – while, more commonly, others were poorer burials under *tegulae* or in amphorae. Although epigraphy which might support burial *ad sanctos* is not datable, these features indicate that in death a socially-mixed population were drawn to some

¹⁷⁶ Vives, *ICERV* 321, 109.

¹⁷⁷ Vives, *ICERV* 321, 109; López Vilar, *Basíliques*, 304.

¹⁷⁸ Godoy Fernández, *Arqueología*, 197-8, proposes that lines in *Pe. VI* indicate that Prudentius was familiar with Tarraco since it appears that he knew that the amphitheatre where the martyrs were killed was adjacent to the sea. (CCSL 126: 319-320, lines 154-6).

¹⁷⁹ López Vilar, *Basíliques*, 296-300. This lies under the Parc Central site.

¹⁸⁰ López Vilar, *Basíliques*, 308-10.

¹⁸¹ Del Amo, *Necrópolis*, 256-70 for a summary of the content and dating of the cemetery ; López Vilar, *Basíliques*, 304.

desirable nucleus, perhaps the tomb of the martyrs or a memorial to them.¹⁸² It seems from the foregoing, therefore, that when Prudentius wrote his poem on Fructuosus and the deacons there probably was an active cult in Tarraco honouring the martyrs, but that it was not until after his death that it became fully developed.

Prudentius' poem on Eulalia presents a problem of a different kind vis-a-vis the archaeological evidence, since he describes a far more elaborate burial place than the excavations seem to reveal. He refers to her tomb as a *tumulus* in Emerita, "where, here, the brilliance of shining marble, both foreign and native, lights up the kindly halls, the worshipping earth watches over her sacred relics and ashes in its bosom, overhead the gleaming roof shines light from its golden panels and cut stones variegate the floor so you would think it a rose-covered meadow blushing with flowers in different ways".¹⁸³ As at Tarragona, extensive archaeological excavations have been carried out at a necropolis in Mérida, to the north-east of the city. This cemetery seems to have been created *de novo* in the beginning of the fourth century on an abandoned suburban site.¹⁸⁴ In a detailed report of work carried out in the 1990's it was concluded that it was likely that an edifice in the necropolis (mausoleum 25) had been a martyrium or had been a memorial to Eulalia containing her relics.¹⁸⁵ This apsed structure, which lay in an east-west direction, was dated to the beginning of the fourth century, apparently the time of Eulalia's death.¹⁸⁶ When a basilica was later erected in the necropolis in the second half of the fifth century, it was positioned so that this edifice fitted exactly at the head of the church in its apse, honoured by its situation in the sanctuary.¹⁸⁷ Inevitably Prudentius was co-opted by the excavators as a witness to the existence of a martyrium at the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century, although his description, as detailed above, falls

¹⁸² Vives considers that the following Tarraco inscriptions refer to resting-places near a "memoria" of the martyrs: 'sancturu [in se]de quiesces' (ICERV 208, 66) and '[in se]de s[a]nctoru [qu]ie[s]ci[s]' (ICERV 209,66); Del Amo, *Necrópolis*, notes that a greater number of sarcophagi and stone interments were in the zone of the basilica from the middle of fifth to the beginning of the seventh century, 264.

¹⁸³ *Pe. III* (CCSL 126:284, lines 186; 191-200): "Hic ubi marmore perspicuo atria luminat alma nitor et peregrinus et indigena, reliquias cineresque sacros servat humus veneranda sinu. Tecta corusca super rutilant de laquearibus aureolis saxaque caesa solum variant, floribus ut rosulenta putes prae rubescere multimodis". See below n.197.

¹⁸⁴ P. Mateos Cruz, *La basilica de Santa Eulalia de Mérida. Arqueología y urbanismo*, *Anejos de AEspA* 19 (1999).

¹⁸⁵ Mateos Cruz, *La basilica*, 114, 115-21, 198.

¹⁸⁶ *Pe. III* (CCSL 126:280, line 77), Prudentius names Maximinian as the ruling emperor at the time of Eulalia's death.

¹⁸⁷ Mateos Cruz, *La basilica*, 51, Fig 14; 56-7, Fig.18.

somewhat short of a match with the archaeological evidence.¹⁸⁸ His imposing *alma atria* (Thomson translates this as a motherly church) does not seem to coincide with the small structure - only thirteen by seven metres - which may have held Eulalia's remains.¹⁸⁹

Not far from the supposed martyrium of Eulalia lay two other mausolea also dating to the fourth century.¹⁹⁰ These were elaborate – one contained a crypt – and could suggest elite burials *ad sanctos* at that time.¹⁹¹ One contained a segment of a mosaic panel which might give credence to Prudentius' mention of mosaic flooring in his *atria*.¹⁹² In fact, mosaic *tesserae* were found in the interior of mausoleum 25, which may have been, according to the excavator, parts of pavements or sepulchre covers.¹⁹³ We can suppose, therefore, that there might have been a small decorated shrine to Eulalia, perhaps in a more modest form than Prudentius' description. This shrine may have later developed into a full-blown basilica, apparently built in her memory, which, if later literary works are to be believed, may also have contained her body.¹⁹⁴ However, there is no fourth or fifth-century epigraphy which supports the structure as being the tomb of Eulalia or real archaeological evidence for a thriving martyrial cult contemporary with Prudentius.¹⁹⁵

As with Fructuosus, we thus have evidence that there was a martyrial cult growing which venerated the saint in the fifth century, but an unclear picture of the situation at the end of the fourth. It seems unlikely that Prudentius' account of Eulalia's

¹⁸⁸ Mateos Cruz, *La basilica*, 198.

¹⁸⁹ Mateos Cruz, *La basilica*, 182. Mateos makes the point that Prudentius refers to the tumulus of Eulalia, not to a basilica or an ecclesia, although Mateos does not seek to explain the phrase “*alma atria*” used by the poet.

¹⁹⁰ Mateos Cruz, *La basilica*, 60-5.

¹⁹¹ Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 256. Since these were north-south-oriented there could be some doubt as to their Christian affiliation.

¹⁹² Mateos Cruz, *La basilica*, 64.

¹⁹³ Mateos Cruz, *La basilica*, 57.

¹⁹⁴ Mateos Cruz, *La basilica*, 200. The excavators cite references in the seventh-century *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium*. For example, as translated by J. Garvin (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1946), at 204-5, V.10 states that “Masona went ...to the basilica of the holy virgin Eulalia and lay upon the floor before the altar under which lay the venerable body of the holy martyr”. They also cite Hydatius as referring to the desecration of Eulalia's martyrium in 429AD, although in fact the chronicler only writes of the Vandal disdain for Emerita as being an affront to the saint - “*cum sanctae martyris Eulaliae iniuria*”, in Burgess, *Hydatius*, 90-1, CCCII V; Palmer states, without archaeological evidence, that Prudentius spoke of a basilica in his poem, *Prudentius*, 269.

¹⁹⁵ J. Ramírez Sádaba, P. Mateos Cruz, *Catálogo de la inscripciones cristianas de Mérida* (Mérida: Museo Nacional del Arte Romano, 2000). There are only two Christian inscriptions dated to the fourth century: no. 26, 63-4, 381AD, no.65, 114-5, 388AD (although others could be fourth-century) and only two inscriptions with Eulalia's name, dated to the sixth and seventh centuries: no.3, 27-9, and no. 5, 31-5.

burial-place was an invention, in spite of his possible exaggeration, although we should not forget its similarity to verses in *Contra Symmachum* II. There he described the temple of the mind, not of marble, which he loved and wished to enter.¹⁹⁶ He used words reminiscent of those in *Peristephanon* III, including the use of *atria* for this heavenly abode.¹⁹⁷ We should also remember that Prudentius is our first extant textual reference to Eulalia. It is tempting to suppose that his poem may have been a positive and innovative force in promoting the cult of the saint.¹⁹⁸ *Peristephanon* XI, on Hippolytus, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, showed that Eulalia's feast was celebrated in Prudentius' home community. This poem may have been written after *Peristephanon* III, and thus his poem on Eulalia may well have been effective in terms of its immediate audience.

Like Eulalia, the saints Emeterius and Chelidonius were first textually attested in the *Peristephanon*. Unlike Eulalia there is no material evidence for their martyrdom in Calagurris or, indeed, for Christian worship during the fourth century. It is Prudentius again who tells us of a probable baptistery in the town and a bishop in his community.¹⁹⁹ There is the possibility that the Calagurris baptistery was erected on the site of the martyrdom of Emeterius and Chelidonius, in an area called the Arenal (a name associated with Prudentius' reference to the martyrs' death in the *harenas*). No remains of this site, however, have been found.²⁰⁰

The final Spanish martyr singled out for the honour of a separate poem was Vincent, who Prudentius tells us was buried on the shore at Saguntum, near Valencia.²⁰¹ At least two sites seem to have the potential to be associated with the remains of Vincent. At the medieval monastery of Saint Vincent de la Roqueta in Valencia, burials of the late third and fourth century have been found and it may be

¹⁹⁶ *CS.II* (CCSL 126: 220, lines 249-54): "Templum mentis amo, non marmore; aurea in illo fundamenta manent fidei, structura nivali consurgit pietate nitens, tegit ardua culmen iustitia, interius spargit sola picta rubenti flore pudicitiae pudor almus et atria servat". "I love a temple of the mind, not marble; In it endures golden foundations of faith, the shining building rises up with snow-white piety, righteousness covers the lofty roof, and within nourishing purity scatters the floor decorated with blushing flowers of chastity, and watches over the halls".

¹⁹⁷ Cf. n.183 above.

¹⁹⁸ A.Recio Veganzones, 'La mártir Eulalia en la devoción popular; Prudencio primer promotor de su culto, peregrinaciones, expansión de sus reliquias e iconografía (ssIV-VII)', *IV Reunió d'arqueologia Cristiana Hispànica* (eds), J. Burt, N.Tena (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1995), 317-336, at 320, notes that Augustine mentions the saint twice between 410 and 419AD.

¹⁹⁹ *Pe. VIII* and *XI*; Espinosa, *Calagurris* 226. "No tenemos restos epigráficos o arqueológicos que testimonien ambiente cristiano en la ciudad durante el S. IV".

²⁰⁰ *Pe. I* (CCSL 126: 251, line 8); Espinosa, *Calagurris*, 223-4.

²⁰¹ This information is given in *Pe. IV* (CCSL 126: 289, lines 97-100).

the earliest Christian site located at the city.²⁰² It has been hypothesised that a sarcophagus found there could have been used as a sepulchre for Vincent.²⁰³ An intramural site at the Plaza de Almoina in Valencia, unusually for the time, contains what may be fifth-century burials. Other late antique structures have been found nearby including a small cross-shaped church erected in the sixth or seventh century, which has been suggested as a memorial connected to Saint Vincent.²⁰⁴ In both cases the archaeological evidence is slender for an early cult site which might have been known to Prudentius.

Because of his purported origin there, praise for Vincent was also included in Prudentius' poem on the eighteen martyrs of Caesaraugusta, although the town may not have acquired relics connected with Vincent until the sixth century. Caesaraugusta possessed necropoleis on each side of the town. In the north, where investigations have been superficial, burials date from the third and fourth century, with little evidence of them being Christian.²⁰⁵ In the east burials have been dated to the first to the sixth century. However, those dated between the fourth and sixth centuries showed no epigraphy or iconography to suggest that they were Christian interments.²⁰⁶ The burials to the west of the town date from the second to the ninth century. Discoveries of a group of burials at Calle Dosset which have covers of marble, and of mosaics similar to Christian ones found in Africa from the same period, have led to fourth or fifth-century dating.²⁰⁷ It has also been suggested that these burials were organised around cult structures, either places of interment of martyrs or Christian memorials. However, these proposals seem to have their roots in literary references to martyrs - particularly those of Encratis, Prudentius' martyr who escaped death but was buried in Caesaraugusta, and to Felix of Gerona whose basilica there was dedicated in the sixth century.²⁰⁸

The necropolis to the south of the city of Caesaraugusta was created from new in the fourth century and thus shows more probable signs of being attracted to a

²⁰² A. Ribera i Lacomba, R. Soriano Sánchez, 'Enterramientos de la Antigüedad Tardía en Valentia', *Lucentum*, 6 (1987), 139-65, 147.

²⁰³ Ribera i Lacomba, Soriano Sánchez, 'Enterramientos', 147.

²⁰⁴ Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 229-32.

²⁰⁵ Galve, Mostalac Carillo, 'Las necrópolis', 85 -96, at 85.

²⁰⁶ Galve, Mostalac Carillo, 'Las necrópolis', 91-2.

²⁰⁷ M. Galve, A. Blanco, 'Nuevos datos para la arqueología funeraria de *Caesar Augusta*: las tumbas paleocristianas de la calle Mosén Pedro Dosset (vial) (Zaragoza)', *Salduie* 2 (2001-2002), 409-414.

²⁰⁸ Galve, Mostalac, Carillo, 'Las necrópolis', 89-90.

martyrial site.²⁰⁹ Two particularly fine sarcophagi, dated to c.340AD were probably found there since they were subsequently discovered in the later church of Saint Engracia (sic), which seems to have been built over the necropolis. One showed Petrine themes, while the other, known as the *receptio animae*, contained an inscription to Incratius which is considered to refer to Encratis.²¹⁰ Unfortunately, however, this looks like a fifth or sixth-century addition dating to a time when martyrial cults had taken a firmer hold on the spiritual needs of the citizens of Zaragoza.²¹¹ Although Vincent and Encratis eventually were honoured by basilicas in their names, the mysterious eighteen Zaragozaan martyrs praised by Prudentius (another first from him) have unfortunately left no physical trail.²¹²

The other saints and towns mentioned by Prudentius in *Peristephanon* IV present material evidence for early martyr veneration that is mixed in quality and quantity. Barcelona, which he associated with Cucufas, was the location of two Constantinian sarcophagi containing Petrine themes and also two further similar dated fragments with Christian images which apparently came from an extramural burial ground.²¹³ At another extramural site in the north-east a mausoleum dating between the fourth and sixth centuries contained a dozen sepulchres, including one covered with a mosaic gravestone. The iconography of this is said to “mean that it is unquestionably the tomb of a martyr located within a *martyrium*, though the name of the martyr remains unknown”.²¹⁴ There is no evidence of a *martyrium* for Cucufas contemporary with Prudentius. He was, in fact, the only author who spoke of Cucufas before the eighth century at which time the Abbey of Sant Cugat, which lies 20 kilometres from Barcelona, claimed to possess his body.²¹⁵

²⁰⁹ As asserted by Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 226.

²¹⁰ Illustrations 11 and 12, Appendix B; A. Mostalac Carillo, ‘Los Sarcófagos Paleocristianos’ in Escribano, Fatas, *La Antigüedad Tardía en Aragón*, 99-105, 109, figs. 97, 98. As with all early sarcophagi with identifiably Christian motifs which are referenced by me, there is the unwritten proviso that the occupants of the tombs were not necessarily Christian in their beliefs.

²¹¹ Mostalac Carillo, ‘Los sarcófagos’, 101. The sarcophagus is also inscribed with the names of Peter, Paul, Adam and Eve and Moses amongst others.

²¹² Kulikowski’s suggestion that “it is best to associate the early archaeological evidence for Christian cult in Zaragoza with the eighteen martyrs” seems unfounded, *Late Roman Spain*, 226

²¹³ G. Ripoll López, ‘The transformation of the city of *Barcino* during Late Antiquity’ in Beltrán, *From Barcino*, 34-43, 42.

²¹⁴ Ripoll López, ‘The transformation’, 42-3, 235, fig. 309.

²¹⁵ X. Barral i Altet, ‘La Basilique Paléochrétienne et Visigotique de Sant Cugat Del Vallés (Barcelone)’, *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome, Antiquité* 86 (1974), 891-928, 892.

As at Barcelona, Christian themed sarcophagi appeared to arrive early in Gerona. The city possessed a rich haul of pre-Constantinian and Constantinian Roman imports, some with images of Peter.²¹⁶ These were built into the wall of the later presbyterium of Saint Felix. Palol questioned as to whether these could have come from a necropolis located in the same place which today is occupied by the church of Saint Felix, wondering if this was the transformation of the old martyrium dedicated to the martyr in his own cemetery.²¹⁷

Although Paulinus' words provide one of the most satisfactory proofs of martyr veneration in the fourth century and support Prudentius' claims for a cult around Justus and Pastor of Complutum, there is no real material evidence to add to this. Very little excavation has taken place at the reputed martyrial site, but it seems over time the ecclesiastical site grew up in what had been a distant suburb of the town.²¹⁸ Epigraphy relating to the two saints does not emerge until the seventh century.²¹⁹ A fourth-century Christian site has been proposed for El Val villa (five kilometres from Complutum) although a cult centre function can only be conjectured.²²⁰

By contrast in Córdoba there have been a number of theories proposed regarding potential martyr sites for Acisclus, Zoellus and three others who also were martyred there, whom Prudentius called the *tres coronas* (probably Faustus, Januarius and Martialis).²²¹ It has been hypothesised, based on extensive excavations, that the materials from the disused amphitheatre of Corduba, located in the north-west of the city, were used to create a massive *palatium/praesidium* called Cercadilla in the late third or early fourth century.²²² The theory follows that when this was no longer required, under the auspices of the powerful Osius of Córdoba (who was deemed familiar with the martyr cults of Rome and elsewhere) it was converted into a Christian cult centre, probably martyrial, perhaps for Acisclus.²²³ A triple-apsed

²¹⁶ Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos*, plate 1, 1-4, plate 3, 1-2.

²¹⁷ Palol, *Arqueología Cristiana*, 277.

²¹⁸ Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 229; Rascón Marqués, Sánchez Montez, 'Realidades Cambiantes', 507-9.

²¹⁹ Vives, *ICERV*, no.304, 101 (630 AD); no.307b, 102-3 (652 AD).

²²⁰ Rascón Marqués, Sánchez Montez, 'Realidades Cambiantes', 503-7. See Chapter 2, 68, n.137.

²²¹ *Pe.IV* (CCSL 126: 286, line 20).

²²² D. Vaquerizo Gil, J. Murillo, (eds.) *El anfiteatro romana de Córdoba y su entorno urbano* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 2011), 510-514.

²²³ Vaquerizo Gil, Murillo, *El anfiteatro*, 512; R. Hidalgo, 'De edificio imperial a complejo de culto: la ocupación cristiana del palacio de Cercadilla' in D. Vaquerizo Gil (ed.) *Espacios y usos funerarios en el occidente romano, Vol II* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 2002), 343-72, 344.

edifice which was surrounded by tombs has been considered the centre of this cult, but securely-dated *ad sanctos* burials there are not considered to be earlier than the sixth century.²²⁴ Burials south of the amphitheatre site (at Parque Infantil de Trafico) dating from the end of the fourth to the beginning of the fifth century appear to be Christian, but it is unclear as to whether this is a cult site.²²⁵ The three *corona* may have been buried or venerated at the site of a late antique necropolis near the church of Saint Peter based on an inscription to them. This has been dated, however, to the fifth or sixth century.²²⁶ Sánchez Ramos states that we do not know where Zoilus (sic) was buried, but, because of an allusion in a later *passio* has suggested that it might have been in a cemetery for foreigners found in the western zone of the city.²²⁷ It is Sánchez Ramos whose words seem to sum up the situation in Córdoba with regard to the martyrs: “the archaeological documentation does not permit us to know with confidence the place of martyrdom, or where the martyrs were buried, nor even the erection of the martyrial centres”.²²⁸

Although Prudentius’ emphasis is on the Spanish martyrs he does praise two saints of Southern Gaul, showing the ties which existed across the Pyrenees. Prudentius was the first witness to a cult of Genesius of Arles.²²⁹ The martyr was associated with two burial zones outside of the city: Trinquetaille, where he was executed and Alysamps, where he was buried.²³⁰ Although both of these necropoleis contained Christian sarcophagi, Beaujard, in her book on Gallic saints’ cults, states that there is no proof that these inhumations were *ad sanctos*; Février and Loseby, however, both note the existence of an epitaph (CIL XII, 961) containing the words *ad sanctum*

Hidalgo believes that this cult was attached to Acisclus, but this is doubted by P. Marfil in ‘El complejo Cristiano de Cercadilla (Córdoba)’, *Anales de Arqueología Cordobesa*, 21-22 (2010-11), 241-252, 249.

²²⁴ Sánchez Ramos, *Corduba*, 36.

²²⁵ Vaquerizo Gil, Murillo, *El Anfiteatro*, 516, based on a glass find depicting an orant (?) and a chi-rho; See 113, n.159 above.

²²⁶ Vaquerizo Gil, *El anfiteatro*, 517, n.317. CIL II.2/7, 638.

²²⁷ Sánchez Ramos, *Corduba*, 36.

²²⁸ I.Sánchez Ramos, ‘La cristianización de las necrópolis de Corduba’, *AEspA*, 80 (2007), “la documentación arqueología no nos permite saber con seguridad en qué lugar fueron martirizados, ni dónde serían enterrados, ni siquiera la instalación de su centro martirial”, 194.

²²⁹ *Pe. IV* (CCSL 126: 287, lines 35-6); P. Février, ‘Arles’ in ‘Provinces Ecclésiastiques de Vienne et d’Arles’ in N. Gauthier and J-C Picard (eds.), *Topographie Chrétienne des Cités de la Gaule* (Paris: De Boccard, 1986), 83.

²³⁰ B. Beaujard, *Le Culte*, 79.

martyre[m], although there seems to be no (early) date attached to this.²³¹ The vast cemetery at Alysamps was popular into the sixth century and beyond, with a church being erected in the mid-fifth century over what was considered to be Genesisius' burial place.²³²

Prudentius was also the first to mention Paulus of Narbonne.²³³ Two main burial sites have been excavated in the extramural city. The earliest, Clos de la Lombarde, claims to possess one of the earliest basilicas in Gaul, dating to the fourth century. The presence of a cavity, located in the crypt, which might have held relics, has led to suggestions of a cult site.²³⁴ Paulus, however, is considered to have been buried in a southern necropolis, also in use in the fourth century. A luxurious sarcophagus found in a family mausoleum has been proposed as a home for the saint's body.²³⁵ Beaujard, however, with regard to both Paul and Genesisius finds it difficult to see the slightest indication of a local cult for either martyr.²³⁶ Therefore, as in the case of the Hispania, we lack specific physical evidence from the fourth or early fifth centuries confirming the worship of the Gallic martyrs praised by Prudentius.

A pattern emerges from the above which indicates that Christians in fourth-century Hispania and Southern Gaul were still being buried along the roads outside of the cities, often in newly formed cemeteries, and sometimes in sarcophagi with Christian iconography. The evidence for martyrial cults, however, in the form of tombs or shrines securely tied to a saint is hard to identify. Secure evidence for martyrial cult centres involving churches and *ad sanctos* burials does not usually appear until later in the fifth century and beyond. Martyrial epigraphy is dated to no earlier than the

²³¹ Beaujard, *Le culte*, 79; Février, 'Arles', 83; S.Loseby, 'Arles in Late Antiquity: *Gallula Roma Arelas* and *Urbs Genesii*' in N. Christie, S.Loseby (eds.), *Towns in Transition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), 45-70, at 59.

²³² Loseby, 'Arles', 59.

²³³ *Pe.IV* (CCSL 126: 287, line 34)

²³⁴ Y. Solier, *Narbonne (Aude): les monuments antiques et médiévaux: le Musée archéologique et le Musée lapidaire*, (Paris: Ministère de la culture et de la communication: Direction de la patrimoine, 1986), 63-5.

²³⁵ Solier, *Narbonne*, 67: See F. Reiss, *The Representation of Narbonne in late Antiquity: 410-720* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Birkbeck College, 2009), 135-9 on the necropoleis of Narbonne and the failure to find conclusive evidence of Paul's burial site.

²³⁶ Beaujard, *Le Culte*, 79. "Au tout debut du Ve siècle, Prudence, dans le Peristephanon, associe le nom de Genès à Arles et celui de Paul à Narbonne. Mais, ni dans un cas ni dans l'autre, il ne fournit la moindre indication sur l'existence d'un culte local".

sixth century, with the exception of the fragment associated with Fructuosus and his companions from the fifth.²³⁷

In fact the best evidence, both textual and archaeological, for a martyr cult contemporaneous with Prudentius comes from Prudentius' *Tarraconensis*: from Tarraco and Fructuosus and his companions. We have a genuine early *Acta* which Prudentius largely followed in his poem, the earliest martyrial epigraphy, albeit fifth-century, and a tight clustering of tombs at the necropolis which signifies a desire for interments to be close to a special place. There is also a mosaic image at the nearby villa of Centcelles, which depicts the three Hebrews in the fire with hands upraised, just like Fructuosus and his deacons as reported in the *Acta* and by Prudentius (see also Chapter Five).²³⁸ The mosaic may not be an *hommage* to the three saints, but it is an intriguing possibility which contributes to the material culture evidence connected with the three martyrs.²³⁹ Nevertheless, in spite of apparent signs of discrete locations of Christian burials, based on the material evidence described in this chapter, it is difficult to see physical signs of martyr cults in Hispania and Southern Gaul which were active during Prudentius' lifetime.

VI. Conclusion

The texts and archaeological remains suggest that without Prudentius' poems there would be only limited proof testifying to active and extensive martyr veneration in Hispania during Prudentius' lifetime. Was Prudentius, therefore, able to effect the promotion of saints' cults in the way he hoped? Although there is no way of knowing whether Prudentius was directly responsible, martyrs whom he included in the *Peristephanon* did appear in the record in the years following his death. As we have seen above, basilicas and shrines developed which bore the names of the saints of the *Peristephanon*, and written works also commemorated their martyrdom. In the main written evidence comes from outside of Hispania since Spanish texts from the years following Prudentius is scarce. Augustine knew of Fructuosus, Vincent and

²³⁷ Y. Duval, 'Projet d'enquête sur l'épigraphie martyrial en Espagne romaine, Visigothique (et Byzantine)', *Antiquité Tardive*, 1 (1993), 173-206, although there are undatable inscriptions, 173-4.

²³⁸ Illustration 29, Appendix B; Chapter 5, 207-8.

²³⁹ As proposed by A. Isla Frez, 'La Epifanía Episcopal en los Mosaicos de la Villa de Centcelles' in Arce, *Centcelles*, 37-50. I doubt the proposal that Centcelles was a very grand mausoleum, see Ch. 2, n.139.

Eulalia.²⁴⁰ Gregory of Tours praised Vincent, Eulalia and Felix of Gerona, whose relics he mentions lay in a church in Narbonne.²⁴¹ Gregory also cites Prudentius' verses on Emeterius and Chelidonius, and picks up on the incident of the ring and handkerchief as recorded by the poet.²⁴² Surprisingly Gregory also tells the little-publicised story, first told by Prudentius, of the schoolmaster Cassian of Imola.²⁴³ Eulalia is again mentioned by another sixth-century bishop, Venantius Fortunatus of Poitiers.²⁴⁴ In the seventh century in Spain we have Bishop Eugenius of Toledo praising Vincent and also the eighteen martyrs of Caesaraugusta, while Isidore of Seville is known to have introduced Emeterius and Chelidonius into Divine Offices.²⁴⁵ The liturgy of the Mozarabic Hymnal also records the names of saints from the *Peristephanon*.²⁴⁶

I conclude by returning to Saint Hippolytus, the celebration of whose feast day started this chapter. The liturgical books of Tarraco show that Hippolytus was venerated in that region prior to the Arab invasion.²⁴⁷ Also Eugenius of Toledo is recorded as composing a mass and prayers for his feast day, which he sent to Bishop Protasius of Tarraco.²⁴⁸ It appears, therefore, that by the seventh century Hippolytus' cult had taken root in what had been Prudentius' Roman province of Tarraconensis. Thus from this, and the references given above, it seems that there is proof that Prudentius' poetry had influenced the subject-matter of martyr worship of Hispano-Gallic Christian communities. However, this was in the future. At the time of Prudentius' writing in the late fourth and very early fifth centuries, there is little material or textual evidence to confirm a following for martyr cults among those communities, and it seems that our best evidence for this relies on the words of Prudentius.

²⁴⁰ Augustine, *Sermones* 273, 274-7 (PL 38:1247-68); J. Arce, 'The City of Mérida (*Emerita*) in the *Vitas Patrum Emeritensium* (VIth century) in Chrysos and Wood, *East and West: Modes of Communication*. "Augustine, in Africa, dedicated a sermon to [Eulalia], converting this fragile girl into a *fortis femina*" (sermon 212), 1-14, 2.

²⁴¹ Gregory of Tours, *Martyrs*, 114 -6, once again confirming the cross-Pyrenean connection.

²⁴² Gregory of Tours, *Martyrs*, 116-7, as did Isidore of Seville, see also n.71.

²⁴³ Gregory of Tours, *Martyrs*, 65.

²⁴⁴ Venantius Fortunatus, *Opera Poetica*, 8.3, *De virginitate*, 185. "Eulalia Emerita tollit ab urbe caput".

²⁴⁵ *Liturgia Mozarabica: secundum regulum beati Isidori* (PL85: 728 – 733).

²⁴⁶ Mozarabischen Hymnen, *Analecta Hymnica*, 27 (1897), 35-41. The saints' poems adapted include Hippolytus, Eulalia, Fructuosus, Agnes, Vincent, and Emeterius and Chelidonius.

²⁴⁷ Palmer, *Prudentius*, 258. See 255-264 for 'Prudentius and the Spanish Church Calendar'.

²⁴⁸ Eugenius, *Ep.* 3 (PL 87: 412).

CHAPTER FOUR

VISUALISING THE MARTYRS: PRUDENTIUS, PAINTER OF PICTURES IN WORDS

I. Introduction

One of the aims of this thesis has been to connect the poetry of Prudentius with the material culture of the period when he was writing. Thus far I have focused on this connection as it relates to Hispania and, to some extent, Southern Gaul. In Chapter Three I looked for physical evidence which might show the existence, in those regions, of cults devoted to martyrs who figured in the *Peristephanon* poems. In the present chapter I turn to two *Peristephanon* poems (IX and XI) which, this time, celebrate martyrs honoured in Italy: the saints Cassian and Hippolytus. These martyr poems are distinctive in their structure as, in place of straightforward narrations of the passions of the saints, each contains an ekphrasis – a description – of paintings apparently seen by Prudentius, which themselves portray how the two martyrs suffered and died for their faith. The paintings, which decorated the shrines where the saints were buried, had an inspirational effect on Prudentius. This chapter will show how the poet sought to communicate his visual and emotional experiences to his audience by textual means, intending that they too would be similarly inspired. We cannot be certain that Prudentius actually saw the paintings as he described them, or indeed that he saw them at all. They may have been a product of an imagination or visual memory stimulated by spiritual epiphany. It seems likely that Prudentius did witness something tangible which caused his revelatory reaction, for, as we shall see, although not numerous, there are extant representations of martyrs in Rome and Northern Italy, which provide circumstantial material evidence of the images' actuality.

It seems certain that Prudentius was initially addressing an audience living in Hispania (although, as we have seen, this does not exclude a subsequent audience beyond the Iberian peninsula, in particular in Southern Gaul). This is demonstrated by information contained in his poem on Hippolytus: *Peristephanon* XI. This was directed to the bishop of his local community, Valerianus, and in it the poet's words show that he has returned to his homeland where he has been able to embrace this

revered priest, and where he is now writing.¹ Further confirmation that this community is in Hispania is provided by the fact that elsewhere in the poem Prudentius states that the festivals of the essentially Spanish saints Chelidonius and Eulalia are already being celebrated by this bishop's flock.²

We know from Prudentius' own words that he believed in the power, albeit not always beneficial, which works of art possessed to influence men's religious beliefs.³ We also know that the poet had produced a series of epigrams to be appended to paintings of Christian subjects - to be displayed, we assume, in a public place.⁴ Although we cannot tell if this project was ever fulfilled, this shows the importance that Prudentius attached to image as an inspirational and instructional force. The material evidence, however, points to the likelihood that ideas regarding the promotion of Christianity and martyrial devotion using visual art which were developing in Italy (and also in the East) had not yet reached the same stage in Hispania, and the poet's verses were a means by which messages about the Christian iconography he had seen could be brought back to his homeland.⁵ Ekphrasis was a descriptive rhetorical tool the purpose of which was to bring its subject matter with vividness (*enargeia*) before the eyes of its audience.⁶ Therefore by the use of eloquently written ekphraseis Prudentius could place the images he had viewed in Italy before his audience in Hispania - thus demonstrating the devotional value of Christian imagery to an audience, who, while accustomed to the non-Christian artistic equivalent, may well have been less than familiar with this concept in a Christian context. Prudentius may even have brought back painted copies of the Italian images he had witnessed to show his audience as evidence.⁷ This, however, would not have had the same effect as his verbal vitality, which, by conjuring up

¹ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 370, lines 1-2); (CCSL 126: 376, lines 179-181): "Quod laetor reditu, quod te, venerande sacerdos, complecti licitum est, scribo quod haec eadem, Hippolyto scio me debere". See 144 below.

² *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 378, lines 237-8). See Chapter 3 regarding Spanish martyrs.

³ *Pe. X*, (CCSL 126: 339, lines 271): "Ars seminandis efficax erroribus" (art has been effective in propagating wrong beliefs). See Chapter 5, section I for further discussion.

⁴ *Tituli Hist. I – XLVIII* (CCSL 126: 390-400, lines 1-196).

⁵ While sarcophagi showing Christian motifs had made the journey from Rome in the early fourth century (see Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos*), there is little to show other forms of Christian imagery taking the same route by the early fifth.

⁶ *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (tr.) G. Kennedy (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), according to Theon, Hermogenes, Aphthonios and Nikolaos, see below on ekphrasis.

⁷ A. Lazaridou (ed.), *Transition to Christianity: Art of Late Antiquity, 3rd-7th Century AD* (New York: Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, 2011), 62-3, on Roman portable paintings.

mental images (*phantasiai*) could convey the reality of the paintings more effectively than the actual substance of two-dimensional reproductions. The ekphraseis, therefore, had a crucial part to play by creating vivid descriptions of the pictures of the martyrs' passions. An elite audience raised on notions of the authority of literary persuasion, would therefore, be influenced by Prudentius' skilful ability to "somehow paint the whole picture of an object in words", and so witness the paintings through his texts.⁸

The two poems on Cassian and Hippolytus also have a special personal quality, being the only ones in which Prudentius makes us aware that he was actually present at the martyrs' tombs. The poems make it clear that, overwhelmed by the imagery of the martyrs' ordeals, Prudentius had profound spiritual and emotional encounters with the saints while viewing the paintings which decorated their tombs, and that he felt himself to be in contact with the physical presence of the saints. Quintilian, the first-century teacher of rhetoric, notes that "the main thing as regards arousing the emotions ... lies in being moved by them oneself".⁹ Prudentius thus intended that his Hispano-Gallic audience should not only visualise the paintings of the saints from his ekphraseis, but that it also should respond with the same emotions which he had felt – the same emotions that had inspired him to write the two martyr poems. Prudentius' verses operated as textual vehicles for the translation of his own sensory experiences at the tombs. On hearing or reading his poems his audience would then feel, as Prudentius had done, the presence of the martyrs and perhaps become active participants in their worship.

Peristephanon IX and XI, with their intriguing blend of text and image, have attracted the attention of scholars over the years. The pieces have been discussed from different viewpoints by various anglophone writers. Amongst them, Palmer, in her book on the *Peristephanon*, located the poems in their classical framework and alluded to their sources and the saints' subsequent veneration, although barely touched on the physical evidence for the shrines.¹⁰ Roberts has focused on the poet's verbal dexterity and his distinctive use of tropes, while analysing the two poems

⁸ A function of *enargeia* as understood by Quintilian: "Tota rerum imago quodam modo verbis depingitur". *Inst. Orat.*, 443, 8.3.63.

⁹ Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, 334, 6.2.26: "Summa enim ... circa movendos adfectus in hoc posita est, ut moveamur ipsi".

¹⁰ Palmer, *Prudentius*, 275.

together with *Peristephanon* XII as a pilgrimage grouping.¹¹ Malamud traced features of the Hippolytus story to models in classical literature and mythology, whilst Witke narrowed this Hippolytan association with the classical past to Prudentius' reworking of Vergilian texts.¹² Grig emphasised the interaction of text and image within the poems and brought to the fore physical evidence for martyrial representation in Late Antique Italian art; Cox Miller has reflected on the role of the martyrs' bodily relics within the framework of the two poems and Kasser has highlighted the significance of the exegetical aspect of Cassian's ekphrasis.¹³ Writers such as these, then, have mainly shown a limited interest in pursuing the evidence pertaining to the material culture of Italy in the later fourth and fifth centuries as it relates to Prudentius' work.¹⁴

In this chapter, by contrast, I examine the visual culture of Italy as it was at the time of Prudentius, building on the work of Grig, but with a view to addressing the question of what it was that Prudentius may have seen which so moved him and motivated him to impart to his audience in Hispania the proposition that visual art had a role to play in Christian worship. I will also reflect on the tradition of the ekphrastic processes which were employed by Prudentius in order to recreate within the minds of his audience the images portrayed in his verses. I shall, however, begin with close readings of the poems on Cassian and Hippolytus in order to listen to the poet's own voice as he disclosed to his audience the sensory and spiritual experiences engendered by his encounter with such inspirational iconography.

¹¹ Roberts, *Poetry*, especially Ch.5.

¹² Malamud, *Poetics*, Ch. 4 on Hippolytus; Witke, 'Recycled Words'.

¹³ Grig, *Making Martyrs*, ch. 6, 'Picturing Martyrs'; P.Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 69-73, 91-2; C.Kasser, 'The Body is not Painted on : Ekphrasis and Exegesis in Prudentius' *Peristephanon* 9', *Ramus*, Vol. 31, 1-2 (2002), 158-187.

¹⁴ P. Testini, 'Di Alcune Testimonianze relative a Ippolito', in *Ricerche su Ippolito*, *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 13 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1977), 45-65, at 56-8. Among non-anglophone writers Testini has discussed representations of martyrdom which could be compared to Prudentius' images of Hippolytus and Cassian. These are the images of Achilles and the figures in the confessor of SS. Giovanni e Paolo as discussed below, and also a medallion depicting the martyrdom of St. Lawrence as illustrated in F. Castagnoli, 'Probabili raffigurazioni del ciborio intorno alla memoria S. Pietro in due medaglie del secolo', *Rivista d'Archeologia Cristiana* 29 (1953), 98-101, at 98, Fig. 1.

II. Prudentius at the Tomb of Cassian

Prudentius begins his poem on Cassian by setting its location at the town of Forum Cornelii (Imola) in Northern Italy. His poem is the first textual mention of the saint that we know of. Nevertheless, the bishop of Ravenna, Peter Chrysologus, who was born in Forum Cornelii and died there in 450AD, was apparently devoted to the cult of Cassian. As he reportedly requested to be buried beside Cassian's remains, there seems to be evidence for the existence of a shrine of the martyr in the early fifth century at Forum Cornelii - and perhaps one of substance, since the town lay within the rich see of Ravenna.¹⁵

As shown in Chapter Three, Prudentius had a heartfelt belief in the benefits which could accrue from devotion to the martyrs. While the saints' favour could be gained by celebrating his or her feast day with prayer and praise, or by reading or hearing the texts on the martyrs' passions, there was much comfort and spiritual advantage to be derived from making a pilgrimage to the actual tombs of the holy. Prudentius states that he has stopped at Forum Cornelii while travelling to Rome, although the original purpose of the journey is unclear. He may have been going to Rome specifically on pilgrimage - perhaps on the occasion of his visit to the tomb of Hippolytus who was buried there - or on matters of state or personal business, since *Peristephanon* IX later refers to unspecified problems which can only be resolved in the capital.¹⁶ These problems have brought him to the shrine of Cassian in search of consolation. Here, *hic*, Prudentius situates himself, bowed low upon the ground before the tomb of the martyr.¹⁷ He laments "in tears I thought over all my wounds and all my life's hardships and pricks of pain".¹⁸

It is at this moment in the poem that Prudentius becomes aware of the painting depicting the suffering of Cassian and describes what he sees:

¹⁵ G. Gordini, 'Cassiano d'Imola, santo, martire', *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* 3 (1963), 909-12; *LRE*. 2, 782, re property owned by Ravenna in Forum Cornelii; Sancti Petri Chrysologus, *Collectio Sermonum* 3 (CCSL 24B: 1017, 165, 4-6). In this sermon Chrysologus expresses particular attachment to the church in Forum Cornelii; Pope Symmachus (498-514) was also a devotee and set up a confessio to Cassian in Rome, *Liber Pontificalis*, 261, 53.

¹⁶ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 329, lines 101-104).

¹⁷ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 326, lines 3,5): "Hic... stratus humi tumulo advolvebar"; cf. Brown, *Cult*, 86, on the use of "hic locus est" or just "hic", on North African shrines to denote the place where the saint can be found.

¹⁸ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 326, lines 7-8): "Dum lacrimans mecum reputo mea vulnera et omnes vitae labores ac dolorum acumina".

I raised my face to heaven and opposite me stood a picture of the martyr painted in brilliant colours bearing a thousand wounds, all his limbs torn, showing his skin broken with tiny pricks. Around him countless boys, (a pitiful sight), were stabbing and piercing his body with the little styli with which they used to run over their wax tablets and write down the droning lesson in school.¹⁹

In a few lines, with this ekphrasis, Prudentius has vividly and clearly captured the image he has witnessed showing the dying moments of the martyr. The words “*miserabile visu*” have pulled his audience empathetically into his poem. Nevertheless, Prudentius needs to provide a narrative background to the scene for his audience and he introduces an exegete, a guardian of the shrine, to serve this purpose. As Christian Kasser has pointed out, “it is not only the pilgrim” [Prudentius] “who is informed about Cassian’s fate ... the ultimate recipient of the exegesis is the reader of” [or listener to] “Prudentius’ poem”.²⁰ The guardian also gives authority to the image by assuring the poet that the picture tells the true story of what happened to the saint. It is no “*anilis fabula*”, no old wives tale, but is recorded in books.²¹

The guardian explains that Cassian was schoolmaster to a large group of boys. He says that Cassian was skilled in the art of shorthand, deftly covering the wax tablet with fast pricks (the word *punctis* here is a repetition of that used by Prudentius in the ekphrasis, highlighting the pricks inflicted on Cassian’s skin).²² However his teaching was often “*aspera ... et tristia*”- the two words, both meaning harsh, emphasize the message - and often moved his young pupils to fear and anger.²³ In spite of his own apparent lack of charity, Cassian was, nevertheless, a Christian who refused to worship at the pagan altars and so was taken before a judge, who, in a mockery of Cassian’s profession, handed over the saint to his pupils for punishment. The children were made “a present of the man who used to flog them,” so that they

¹⁹ *Pe.IX* (CCSL 126: 326, lines 9-16): “Erexī ad caelum faciem, stetit obvia contra fucis colorum picta imago martyris plagas mille gerens, totos lacerata per artus, ruptam minutis praeferens punctis cutem. Innumeri circum pueri (*miserabile visu*) confossa parvis membra figebant stilis, unde pugillares soliti percurrere ceras scholare murmur adnotantes scripserant”.

²⁰ Kasser, ‘The body’, 168.

²¹ *Pe.IX* (CCSL 126: 326, lines 18-9).

²² *Pe.IX* (CCSL 126:326, line24): cf. line 12.

²³ *Pe IX* (CCSL 126: 327, line 25).

could take pleasure in shedding Cassian's blood.²⁴ The saint is stripped of his clothes, his hands are tied and he is given over to the band of boys armed with their sharp styli. They are, as Grig puts it, to "literally write their teacher's body to death".²⁵

Having provided a back story, the guardian's words now amplify Prudentius' original ekphrasis of the painting, so that Prudentius' audience can envisage the portrayal of the death throes of the martyr in greater detail.²⁶ He tells of how the built-up resentment of the boys is freed; some throw their wooden writing tablets which smash and break against Cassian's face, leaving it bleeding; others attack him with sharp iron pricks (*acumina ferrea*) so that his body is covered with wounds (*vulnerum*) from which the blood is dripping. While the older boys plunge their styli into his inner vital organs, bringing the relief of death closer, younger boys only pierce the flesh lightly but cause him to suffer sharp pains (*dolorum spiculis*) which cause greater torment. Cassian begs the boys to be stronger and end his misery. Nonetheless, his pupils delight in making pricks, furrows and interwoven strokes (*puncta ... sulcisque intexere sulcos*) on his body, in mimicry of the writing exercises that the saint forced upon them and which had so often brought them to tears. They take so much pleasure in their torturing that they no longer want what Cassian, the mean teacher, had refused in the past: a holiday from school. However, the long drawn-out punishment is not releasing the saint from his distress and it is not the boys but Christ who, taking pity from heaven, eventually allows Cassian to die.²⁷ "The blood follows the open passages from the source in the veins within and leaves the heart, and through so many holes pierced in the body the pulsing warmth of life in the entrails departs".²⁸

This supplementary ekphrasis concludes with the guardian recapitulating to Prudentius that the picture the poet sees is evidence of Cassian's suffering. "This, stranger (*hospes*) is the story you wonder to see portrayed in bright colours, this is

²⁴ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126. 327, line 38): "Donetur ipsis verberator parvulis".

²⁵ Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 114.

²⁶ As detailed in lines 45-92, *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 327-9).

²⁷ Kasser, 'The body', 170. It is only Christ who has the power to do this.

²⁸ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126:329, lines 89-92): "Sanguis ab interno venarum fonte patentes vias secutus deserit praecordia, totque foraminibus penetrati corporis exit fibrarum anhelans ille vitalis calor" (tr.) Thomson, 227, with modifications.

the glory of Cassian”.²⁹ Prudentius is then told that he can ask any wish of the martyr, for “in his great goodness” he will hear all valid prayers.³⁰ The guardian’s authority confirms Prudentius’ own belief in the power of prayer to the saints. The poem is rounded out as Prudentius obeys the guardian’s suggestion and returns to his submissive pose at the tomb and to his first person narrative:

Then I review all my secret hardships, then murmur all that I
desired and feared. I had left home behind in uncertain fortune and
with faltering hope of future happiness. I am heard. I go to Rome,
and find all turns out favourably.³¹

Prudentius then returns home and concludes, as was his wont in his martyr poems, by praising the saint: in this case, Cassian.

With regard to Prudentius’ message for his audience, which I have suggested in Chapter One was predominately in Hispania and Southern Gaul, the essential function of *Peristephanon* IX was twofold: to show the power of Cassian to alleviate the suffering of his devotees and to attest that Christian iconography could be an inspirational means of stimulating Christian faith. Both revolve around the description of the painting. Early on in the poem Prudentius has set up for his Spanish audience the concept that they could seek succour from the martyr in times of trouble. He tells them of his own sorrows which have brought him tearfully before Cassian’s tomb.³² In his use of language he also brings a sense to the poem that he identifies with the pain – he thus participates in the suffering of the martyr. Although synonymic, the words he has used to describe his own anguish correspond with those he uses in the ekphrasis to describe that of Cassian. Prudentius’ pricks of pain (*dolorum acumina*) reflect the pricks (*punctis*) which the boys inflict on Cassian. The wounds (*mea vulnera*) he felt match the wounds (*plagas*) borne by the saint. The words Prudentius used about himself: *dolorum*, *acumina* and *vulnera*, themselves are

²⁹ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 329, lines 93-4): “Haec sunt, quae liquidis expressa coloribus, hospes, miraris, ista est Cassiani gloria”. Thomson translates “hospes” as stranger, rather than visitor or guest, 227.

³⁰ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 329, lines 97-8).

³¹ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 329, lines 101-4): “Tunc arcana mei percenseo cuncta laboris, tunc quod petebam, quod timebam murmuro et post terga domum dubia sub sorte relictam et spem futuri forte nutantem boni. Audior, urbem adeo, dextris successibus utor”.

³² Roberts, *Poetry*, 134, somewhat sceptically sees Prudentius’ tears as a commonplace in the syntax of petition and prayer, although I see no reason why this emotion cannot be regarded as genuine in Prudentius’ case.

also repeated in the guardian's later more detailed description of the injuries suffered by Cassian.³³ Thus by tying his afflicted state of mind into the afflictions of the martyr, he is better able to communicate the emotions which he experienced when viewing the painting of the broken body of Cassian to those listening to or reading his text.

The introduction of the tomb guardian as an interpreter gives a credibility to the representation of Cassian's martyrdom witnessed by Prudentius.³⁴ His is the first textual mention of Cassian and the guardian's assertion that the picture presented a true story which was recorded in books, may well be a way of Prudentius adding weight to his record of the saint's martyrdom.³⁵ With this independent interpretation the poet deploys a common device of classical literature as used, for example, in the *Imagines* of Philostratus, Longus' 'Daphnis and Chloe' and 'The Tabula of Cebes' where the viewer of an image is guided through its content by an exegete.

In the case of Cassian, the guardian's exegesis of the painting goes far beyond Prudentius' initial ekphrasis in its use of horrific and bloodthirsty language to describe the actions of its subjects and the final passing of the saint. To quote Roberts: "the physical details of suffering and spiritual transcendence, contribute most to belief in the efficacy of the cult".³⁶ Therefore the fulsome description of the violence of the attack on Cassian served to enhance the status of the saint. Quintilian opined that "it would even be permitted to invent spurious incidents of the kind which usually happen" in order to make the facts more evident.³⁷ Accordingly it would seem that a level of exaggeration by Prudentius would have been permissible in order to make more vivid to his audience the suffering of the saint and thus promote devotion to his cult.

While Prudentius may have embellished the scene depicted in the painting with excessively gruesome details, there is no good reason to doubt that what he witnessed was essentially what was described, as will be discussed later in this

³³ "Acumina ferrea" (iron pricks), (CCSL 126: 327, line 51); "vulnerum" (wounds) and "dolorum spiculis" (sharp pains) (CCSL 126:328, lines 58 and 62).

³⁴ As an internal narrator the guardian also fulfils the purpose described by Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.* 4.2.125 as "the credibility which the personal authority of the narrator lends to a story" - "adferat fidem expositioni narrantis auctoritas".

³⁵ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 326, lines 19 -20): "Historiam pictura refert, quae tradita libris veram".

³⁶ Roberts, *Poetry*, 138.

³⁷ Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, 443, 8.3.70: "Licebit etiam falso adfingere quidquid fieri solet".

chapter. The manner of Cassian's death does not lack feasibility. Suggestions have been made that Prudentius might have been reminded of the pupils who killed their traitor schoolmaster in Livy's history or the fourth-century story of Mark of Arethusa, whose demise also featured, amongst other weapons, sharp styli.³⁸ However, the concept of using writing implements as weapons was not new. Suetonius records an incident where a senator was stabbed by pens on the orders of Caligula and another in which styli and wax tablets were hurled at the Emperor Claudius, gashing his face.³⁹ Prudentius' treatment of the body as a text, moreover, was not original.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the Spanish bishop, Potamius of Lisbon, in a bloodthirsty work reminiscent in its brutality of Prudentius' poem, had recounted that the martyr Isaiah had suffered writing upon his body; in the course of Isaiah's martyrdom Hebrew letters had been written on his head with a saw (*hebraeas capitis litteras*).⁴⁰ In fact, Potamius uses the same word, *sulcus*, as Prudentius has done in the *Peristephanon*, to describe the furrows which were opened up in Isaiah's skin.⁴¹ The likelihood that Prudentius knew of Potamius' text in Hispania is increased by the resemblance between the closing lines of Cassian's passion, as reported above, and Potamius' description of the blood gushing from Isaiah's veins.⁴² Nevertheless, the possibility that Prudentius might have been influenced by other texts in writing *Peristephanon* IX does not in any way diminish the probability of his having viewed the actuality of the tomb painting. What the poet saw may have prompted recollections of other authors' approaches to writing similarly violent scenes, without this necessarily negating the sincerity of his own descriptions.

There can be little doubt as to the force of Prudentius' reaction to the presence of Cassian's relics and the sight of the image of his passion. *Peristephanon* IX on

³⁸ For example, Delehaye, *Legends*, 77; Palmer, *Prudentius*, 242-3. (Both quote Livy, 5.27.9 and Gregory of Nazianzus, *In Julian*, cap.89).

³⁹ Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* (tr.) R. Graves (London: Penguin, 1979), Caligula, 166, cap.28; Claudius, 193, cap.15. Claudius is also said to have paranoically banned stylus-cases from visitors, 206, cap.35.

⁴⁰ Potamius, *De martyro Esaiæ* (CCSL 69A: 201, line 23).

⁴¹ Potamius, *De martyro Esaiæ* (CCSL 69A: 201, line 20); cf. *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 328, line 77).

⁴² Potamius, *De martyro Esaiæ* (CCSL 69A: 201, lines 26-7; 28-9): "Fontis fluenta purpurei, laxatis venarum lapsibus" - "streams flowing from the purple source as the loosened veins [spilt their contents]" and "tecta gurgite sanguinis venarum" - "veins are hidden by the gushing blood". Cf. n.28 above; Potamius played an important role in the early phases of the Arian controversy in the West, and thus it seems likely that he was of sufficient note to have been known to Prudentius and his Spanish audience, Conti, *Life and Works*, 5ff; see Chapter 1, 34-5 on fourth-century Spanish writers.

Cassian and, as we shall see, *Peristephanon* XI on Hippolytus are important in that Prudentius situates himself physically within these poems. In each he places himself in a devotional pose before the tombs, and leaves, lighter in heart, with his prayers answered. This is significant. These are the only martyr poems in which this occurs.⁴³ We are made aware of an emotional and spiritual contact between Prudentius and the two martyrs. In the case of Cassian this seems especially intimate. Seeing the painting in all its bright colours has brought the story of the saint's suffering and death to life for him. Prudentius seems, in fact, to be responding and communicating with the picture of Cassian to the extent that the "*imago martyris*" becomes the material substance of the saint, rather than with the remains which are buried in the tomb. According to Michael Roberts the devotee at a shrine is, "in an emotionally excited state" where he "cannot easily distinguish between martyr and image of martyr".⁴⁴ Prudentius appears to have achieved this intense emotional state, as is evidenced by his telling of his actions at Cassian's shrine: "I clasp the tomb, and I shed tears, the altar grows warm with my lips, the stone with my breast".⁴⁵ As we have seen above, in his language Prudentius seems to identify with the suffering of the saint, and we are again made conscious of this, as the tears he sheds for Cassian seem also to be for himself and "all his private hardships".⁴⁶ However, although he has come to the shrine as a stranger, a *hospes*, Prudentius has been inspired to place these problems before the image of Cassian, which he perceives as the embodiment of the martyr. Through the image he has made a connection with the saint, who has responded, Prudentius believes, by miraculously granting his prayers and resolving his difficulties.

This saint, at first sight, appears to be a less than sympathetic character, according to the background story provided by Prudentius. The manner in which the poet has

⁴³ In *Peristephanon* XII we know he is in Rome, but as an outsider, with an exegete explaining the celebrations which are taking place on the feast days of Peter and Paul. *Pe. XII* (CCSL 126: 379, lines 1-2).

⁴⁴ Roberts, *Poetry*, 136; cf. V. Platt, *Facing the Gods: Epiphany and Representation in Greco-Roman Art, Literature and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 48. The emotional involvement of Prudentius can be compared to the kind of epiphanic experience described by Platt in relation to engagements with Greco-Roman gods. "The authenticity and religious efficacy of sacred iconography ... were for many ancient thinkers dependent upon the gods' ability to render themselves visible independently of their material representations – on the authority of epiphany as a seemingly *unmediated* visual encounter with divinity".

⁴⁵ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126:329, lines 99-100): "Conplector tumulum, lacrimas quoque fundo, altar tepescit ore, saxum pectore".

⁴⁶ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 329, line 101): "Arcana ...cuncta laboris"; cf. (CCSL 126:326, lines 7-8).

recorded the loathing that the children had for Cassian seems curious, especially when compared to the unreserved adulation which he normally heaps upon the subjects of his martyr poems. This “mean teacher” used to flog his pupils, reduce them to tears with his demands, refuse to give them holidays.⁴⁷ Michael Roberts has suggested that the empathy which Prudentius feels for Cassian’s plight could, in part, be explained by hostility which the poet has himself encountered in Spain - aroused perhaps by his literary abilities or by the conduct of his office in the Imperial government.⁴⁸ While this proposal is plausible, it seems more likely that Prudentius would compare his own struggles to instruct a sometimes unreceptive audience in matters of Christian ideology, as betrayed by the exhortative and didactic nature of many of his poems, with those of the schoolmaster’s attempts to keep control of his unruly pupils. An alternative explanation for Prudentius’ affinity with the martyr might be found, however, in the *Praefatio* which he wrote to his complete works. In this Prudentius makes no mention of his childhood other than the revealing line: “my first years wept under the crack of the rod”.⁴⁹ While the images in the painting may be as described, it is possible that Prudentius might have incorporated memories of his own miserable schooldays into the words he gave the guardian to speak on the hardheartedness of the teacher – memories, indeed, which must have been familiar to many members of his Hispano-Gallic audience.

Catherine Chin reminds us that this violent behaviour of the teacher was something of a *topos* in literature: Horace called his grammar teacher Orbilius, *plagosus* (fond of flogging); Martial “assumes the commonality of the beating grammarian”; Ausonius’ grammarian Ammonius was said to be of a savage nature; and, in particular, according to his *Confessions*, Augustine appears to have spent his schooldays in constant fear.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, there may be a subtext in the poem in which Prudentius has been able to come to terms with the unhappy events in his childhood by feeling genuine compassion for the suffering teacher Cassian - while he may also with his tears be reliving his early suffering. This possibility increases the special personal interaction Prudentius has with the saint and his sequential commitment to Cassian’s cult. Prudentius’ reaction to the painting of Cassian’s

⁴⁷ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126: 328, line 76): “Avare doctor”; (CCSL 126:327, 38; 328, lines 72,75-6).

⁴⁸ Roberts, *Poetry*, 148.

⁴⁹ *Praef.* (CCSL 126: 1, lines 7-8): “Aetas prima crepantibus flevit sub ferulis”.

⁵⁰ Chin, *Grammar and Christianity*, 110- 3.

passion is thus essentially an intense private one, played out in what was probably a relatively small shrine in a modest North Italian town. The poet seems to have undergone the process of self-transformation identified by, amongst others, Markus and Bitton-Ashkelony, as characteristic of the experience of the pilgrim in a holy place. This was a “state of alienation from the world” which enabled the pilgrim to “encounter the sacred”.⁵¹ Bitton-Ashkelony rejects Victor Turner’s theory that the major experience of pilgrimage was the achievement of *communitas* – an egalitarian association in which hierarchical secular roles of everyday life are abandoned.⁵² It would appear to me, however, that in Prudentius’ works both of these two notions can co-exist.

As we shall see in the following section, Prudentius’ personal experience at the tomb of Hippolytus, while having much in common with that at the shrine of Cassian, is, in contrast to Forum Corneli, set on the larger stage of mighty Rome. Here, Prudentius ultimately becomes one of a crowd, both patrician and plebeian, who gather joyously to celebrate at Hippolytus’ shrine.⁵³

III. Prudentius at the Tomb of Hippolytus

In his verses in honour of Hippolytus, Prudentius records experiencing the same kind of revelatory encounter with an inspirational martyrial image as that which took place at Cassian’s tomb. His opening lines establish from the outset the promise of visual experiences for him in Rome, as he scours the city searching for the tombs of martyrs: “I have seen countless graves of saints in the city of Romulus, Valerianus, dedicated servant of Christ”.⁵⁴ Prudentius’ poem on Hippolytus takes the form of a letter subsequently written to this Valerianus, his bishop back home in Hispania. The bishop has requested him to seek out and report back concerning the inscriptions incised on the tombs of the martyrs, and so in this poem it is Prudentius who takes on the exegetical role. It is on one of these enthusiastic forays, as he “examines with

⁵¹ Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred*, 10.

⁵² Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred*, 10-12; See also J. Eade, M. Sallnow (eds.), *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (London: Routledge, 1991), 4-5.

⁵³ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 376, lines 199- 202): “The majestic city disgorges her Romans in a stream; with equal ardour patricians and plebeian host are jumbled together shoulder to shoulder, for the faith banishes distinctions of birth”. “Urbs augusta suos vomit effunditque Quirites, una et patricos ambitione pari confundit plebeia falanx umbonibus aequis discrimen procerum praecipitante fide” (tr.) Thomson, 319.

⁵⁴ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 370, lines 1-2): “Innumeros cineres sanctorum Romula in urbe vidimus, O Christi Valeriane sacer”.

his eyes” (again emphasising the visual) the memorials and any inscriptions which might tell of the ancient deeds of the saints, that the poet finds the tomb of Hippolytus.⁵⁵ This discovery prompts Prudentius to recount the martyr’s story – a narrative which contains at its heart the ekphrasis of a painting which shows in horrific detail the death of the saint. Moreover, the poem contains not only a description of this picture but also a series of ekphrastic passages which allow Prudentius to bring before his audience’s eyes the physical landscape surrounding it.

This narrative concerning the saint’s death, however, begins somewhat unexpectedly with a long reference to Hippolytus’ early attachment to the schism of Novatianism. Although the martyr repented of the folly of supporting this perverse doctrine and returned to orthodoxy, Prudentius obliges Hippolytus to reiterate his regret for teaching this wrong belief to his followers, and urges them “*catholicis reddite*”.⁵⁶ It is with these companions that he is brought for judgement as a Christian before a “maddened ruler” at the mouth of the Tiber.⁵⁷ Following the traditional pattern of martyr narratives, the judge, already responsible for mass persecution in Rome, puts the Christians through excruciating torture in his efforts to force them to apostatize.⁵⁸ Failing in this, he then sends them to a miscellany of deaths. Some are beheaded. Some crucified, some burnt and others drowned. When Hippolytus is presented to him, the judge is pressed to devise an original execution for their leader as an example to the other Christians. On hearing Hippolytus’ name, the judge decrees that it would be appropriate for wild horses to bring about the saint’s death. The saint’s feet are bound and he is tied to a rope attached to untamed horses. These race through the countryside dragging Hippolytus’ body behind them, ripping it apart, leaving the bloody remains strewn over rocks and thorny shrubs.⁵⁹ It is at this point in his narrative that Prudentius discloses that:

a painted wall carries a representation of the crime, on which
pigments of many colours set out the outrage, and above the tomb
a likeness is depicted powerful in its bright images, portraying the
bleeding limbs of the man as he was dragged to his death. I saw the

⁵⁵ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 370, lines 17-19); “*Lustro oculis*”.

⁵⁶ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 370-1, lines 19-34).

⁵⁷ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126:371, line 39): “*insano rectori*”.

⁵⁸ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 371-2, lines 53-76).

⁵⁹ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 372-4, lines 85-122).

moist points of the rocks, excellent father, and the purple stains on the brambles. A hand skilled in imitating green vegetation had also portrayed the red blood in vermilion. One could see the limbs scattered, joints broken, lying randomly in unpredictable places. The painter had included the saint's loving friends following with tearful footsteps where his erratic course traced its fractured path.⁶⁰

The ekphrasis of the painting contains words which reinforce the presence of Prudentius at the tomb and his witnessing of the horrors depicted in the painting. He declares to Valerianus, "*vidi, optime papa*" ("I saw, excellent father") and later repeats the visual emphasis: "*cernere erat... membra...sparsa...*" ("one could see limbs scattered...").⁶¹ Prudentius continues his description by adding to his portrayal of Hippolytus' sorrowing followers, who now retrieve the saint's remains. The visual motif persists as "stunned with grief, and with searching eyes, they went along and filled the folds of their robes with mangled flesh".⁶² These devotees gather up the head of the saint and the rest of his body parts, mopping up every speck of blood, and then, once sure that they possess the whole man, "a place is chosen on which to set a tomb".⁶³ With regard to these last lines (135-151) the oft-quoted words of Gabriel Bertonière are once again worth repeating:

It is ... curious that the description of the painting is not only mentioned in the context of the narration but serves as part of the narration itself, particularly in the part which describes the gathering of the martyr's members. In fact one is not sure where

⁶⁰ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 374, lines 123-134): "Exemplar sceleris paries habet inlitus, in quo multicolor fucus digerit omne nefas, picta super tumulum species liquidis viget umbris effigians tracti membra cruenta viri. Rorantes saxorum apices vidi, optime papa, purpureasque notas vepribus inpositas. Docta manus virides imitando effingere dumos luserat et minio russeolam saniem. Cernere erat ruptis compagibus ordine nullo membra per incertos sparsa iacere situs. Addiderat caros gressu lacrimisque sequentes, devia quo fractum semita monstrat iter". As translated by Roberts (with some modifications) in *Poetry*, 154.

⁶¹ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126, 374, line 127); *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126, 374, line 131). With "vidi" followed by "cernere erat" Prudentius repeats Vergil, *The Aeneid* (ed.), J. Mackail (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), Bk.6, 237, 582, 585; 238, 596.

⁶² *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 374, lines 135-6): "Maerore attoniti atque oculis rimantibus ibant inplebantque sinus visceribus laceris".

⁶³ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 374-5, lines 137-151): "Metando eligitur tumulo locus"; cf. *Pe. VI* (CCSL 126: 319, lines 136-41). Here also, Prudentius appears to be uncomfortable with the notion of martyrs' relics being divided.

the description of the painting ends and the thread of the story is taken up again.⁶⁴

Bertonnière has doubts as to whether the ekphrasis of the painting did continue through the actions surrounding the gathering of Hippolytus' body parts and the choice of a tomb site, while conversely Charles Witke considers that there is a demarcation line and "what began with 'an image painted above the tomb' (line 125) ends with the picture of the tomb being erected (at line 151)".⁶⁵ It is possible to interpret the ekphrasis of the painting as still carrying on, even including the later appearance of the poet himself at the tomb, as proposed by Malamud.⁶⁶ However, I incline to Witke's view which permits one to see an end to the description of the painting and the immediate beginning of another ekphrastic passage that follows, which Prudentius uses to describe the physical location of the tomb. In this the poet tells us that now the body is moved away from the river mouth and taken to a *crypta* outside the walls of Rome, and evocatively gives an account of what is certainly one of the city's catacombs:

Not far from the outer ramparts by the cultivated land of the pomerium a crypt opens up descending to hidden depths. Into its obscurity a path leads downward with curving steps and shows the way through the windings with light from a source unseen. For the brightness of day enters the doorway as far as the top of the chamber's mouth and illuminates the threshold of the entrance chamber. Then as you progress easily the dark night of the place is seen to grow blacker in the indistinct cavern; where openings let into the lofty ceilings shed bright rays over the cave. Alcoves intertwine on this side and that of narrow halls in shadowy galleries, yet within the hollow belly of the carved-out mountain frequent shafts of light penetrate from the openings in the vault. So

⁶⁴ G. Bertonnière, *The Cult Center of the Martyr Hippolytus on the Via Tiburtina*, BAR International Series 260 (1985), 42; referenced by, amongst others, Roberts, *Poetry*, 154, n.49, and P. Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination*, 70.

⁶⁵ Bertonnière, *Cult Center*; 42; Witke, *Recycled Words*, 134.

⁶⁶ Malamud, in *Poetics*, 86, states that "by refusing to close the frame of the ekphrasis (sic), Prudentius creates the impression that the painting contains everything in the rest of the poem, including the saint's tomb and even the poet himself, who later appears as a character contemplating the mirrored shrine in the center of the tomb".

it is possible to perceive the brightness of the sun even below the earth and enjoy its light. Such was the place of concealment Hippolytus' body was entrusted to, and nearby was an altar dedicated to God.⁶⁷

With the conclusion of this description the poem now returns to Prudentius in Rome and his own presence at Hippolytus' tomb. We are conscious, however, that Prudentius himself has made the same descent into the darkness as Hippolytus' body did. His visual experience of the journey is confirmed by the words "*visa est*" and "*cernere*": it is seen and perceived.⁶⁸ Prudentius has arrived here, "*hic*" again, at the place where the saint can be found, and, as at the tomb of Cassian, he once more takes on the role of the archetypal Christian sufferer.⁶⁹ He states that:

The altar ... assists the hopes of men with kindly good favour.
Here, whenever I bowed low in prayer, a sick man diseased in soul
and body, I gained help. My glad return, my opportunity to
embrace you, reverend priest, my writing these words, I know that
I owe to Hippolytus, to whom Christ our God has given power to
grant what one requests.⁷⁰

We sense from the words "whenever I bowed in prayer ... I gained help" that the problems of Prudentius have brought him on many occasions to the tomb. But we learn that the poet has again been made well bodily and spiritually by his prayers to a martyr. By granting them, Hippolytus has enabled Prudentius to return happily home (as signified by his embrace of Valerianus), with his problems solved. We also now realise that Prudentius is writing his poem in Hispania, and already has seen

⁶⁷ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 375, lines 154-170): "Haud procul extremo culta ad pomeria vallo mersa latebrosis crypta patet foveis. Huius in occultum gradibus via prona reflexis ire per anfractus luce latente docet. Primas namque fores summo tenus intrat hiatu inlustratque dies limina vestibuli. Inde ubi progressu facili nigrescere visa est nox obscura loci per specus ambiguum, occurrunt celsis inmissa foramina tectis, quae iaciant claros antra super radios. Quamlibet ancipites texant hinc inde recessus arta sub umbrosis atria porticibus, at tamen excisi subter cava viscera montis crebra terebrato fornice lux penetrat. Sic datur absentis per subterranea solis cernere fulgorum luminibusque frui. Talibus Hippolyti corpus mandatur opertis propter ubi adposita est ara dicata deo" (tr.) Roberts (with modifications), *Poetry*, 157-8.

⁶⁸ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 375, lines 159,168).

⁶⁹ See n.17 re the use of 'hic'; see Perkins, *Suffering*, especially at 12, on the self-representation of Christians as a "community of sufferers".

⁷⁰ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 376, lines 175-82): "Ara spes hominum placida prosperitate iuvat. Hic corruptalis animique et corporis aeger oravi quotiens stratus, opem merui. Quod laetor reditu, quod te, venerande sacerdos, conplecti licitum est, scribo quod haec eadem, Hippolyto scio me debere, deus cui Christus posse dedit quod quis postulet adnuere" (tr.) Thomson (with modifications), 317.

Valerianus. Therefore the poem is not just for the benefit of the bishop, but for a wider audience in Hispania, who, although they may have heard of the wonders of Rome, may not as yet have experienced the visual stimulation which could be found at its martyr shrines.⁷¹ Accordingly Prudentius then goes on to give a detailed description of the rich fabric of the tomb which surrounds the painting:

The shrine itself, which holds within it that body which the soul
has laid aside, gleams with solid silver. A rich hand has fixed to it
shining white plates with a smooth surface which are bright like a
concave mirror, and not content to cover the approach with stones
of Paros [marble] has added shining silver to ornament the work.⁷²

In contrast to his poem to Cassian, in this work Prudentius continues beyond his personal interaction with the martyr and his verses open out to include the many worshippers who have also come to pay their respects to the saint – kissing the tomb and shedding tears over it, as Prudentius had done at Cassian’s shrine.⁷³ The narrative moves on again to the celebration of Hippolytus’ feast day, when joyous crowds of people of every age and class now stream out of Rome and from all over Italy to converge on the tomb.⁷⁴ So many come that a *templum* has to be built to accommodate them all. Prudentius now, in the last of his descriptions of the created physical space around Hippolytus’ body, tells us that this church is:

... renowned for its princely decoration ... , a lofty church with
towering walls, and a great one because of its proud grandeur, and
gifts have made it rich. A double row of pillars supporting gilded
beams holds up the panelled roof, and there are also slender aisles
with lower roof which stand back and widen the sides all along
their length, while up the middle there stretches a broader passage-
way making an open space under a high roof, rising to a loftier top.

⁷¹ *Pe. II* (CCSL 126: 275-6, lines 537, 541-42). In his poem to Lawrence, Prudentius tells us that situated on the river Ebro, he and his fellow Christians have only “heard report of how full Rome is of buried saints” (tr.) Thomson, 141.

⁷² *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 376, lines 183-188): “Ipsa illas animae exuvias quae continent intus aedacula argento fulgurat ex solido. Praefixit tabulas dives manus aequore levi candentes, recavum quale nitet speculum, nec Pariis contenta aditus obducere saxis addidit ornando clara talenta operi”.

⁷³ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 376, lines 189-194).

⁷⁴ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 376-7, lines 195-212).

Facing you, at the top of some steps, rises the platform from which
the priest proclaims God.⁷⁵

Inspired, perhaps, by seeing the way in which the Roman Christian community had coalesced around the worship of Hippolytus, in his closing verses Prudentius asks Valerianus to include Hippolytus' yearly festival amongst those saints' days already celebrated by the bishop's community - a Spanish community which would also assuredly benefit from its veneration of the martyr.⁷⁶ The poet then once more alludes to the dangers of wrong belief, which could bring harm to that community: "may your [Valerianus'] sheepfold be full and the wolf shut out from it and your flock never reduced by his seizing a lamb".⁷⁷ In conclusion Prudentius commends himself into the care of this shepherd bishop, who will in his turn be finally taken up to heaven as a companion of the holy Hippolytus.⁷⁸

One cannot tell whether the saints Cassian and Hippolytus would have been known to Prudentius' Hispano-Gallic audience before his poems were written. There is no known record of Cassian before the early fifth century, although a confusing collection of martyrs named Hippolytus has been documented.⁷⁹ The identity of the saint is further complicated by the fact of his punishment in the fashion of his namesake, the Hippolytus of legend: the plays of Euripides and Seneca both detail deaths where the mythical youth is smashed on sharp rocks as his horses run amok; Seneca's inclusion of a scene where Hippolytus' followers gather his remains further parallels Prudentius' story; Ovid and Vergil both poetized his demise.⁸⁰ We do also have material confirmation that the educated elite among Prudentius' Hispano-Gallic

⁷⁵ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126:377, lines 216-226): "... Cultu nobile regifico, parietibus celsum sublimibus atque superba maiestate potens muneribusque opulens. Ordo columnarum geminus laquearia tecti sustinet auratis suppositus trabibus. Adduntur graciles tecto brevior recessus, qui laterum seriem iugitur exsinent. At medios aperit tractus via latior alti culminis exurgens aditiore apice. Fronte sub adversa gradibus sublime tribunal tollitur, antistes praedicat unde deum" (tr.) Thomson, 319, 321.

⁷⁶ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 377-8, lines 231-8). See Ch. 3 for further discussion of these lines.

⁷⁷ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 378, lines 241-2): "Sic tibi de pleno lupus excludatur ovili agna nec ulla tuum capta gregem minuat" - the wolf being the conventional metaphor for the heretic, as in Tertullian, *de praescriptione haereticorum*, 3, 92, 12-4, lines 2-3, *Tertullien* (SC 46) (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1957).

⁷⁸ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 378, lines 243-6).

⁷⁹ J.Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West: the Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8-12, on the various martyrs Hippolyti; See also Malamud, *Poetics*, 80-1 and Lavarenne, *Prudence*, 159.

⁸⁰ Euripides, *Hippolytus* (tr.) G. Murray (London: George Allen, n.d.); Seneca, *Tragedies* (tr.) F.J. Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), *Hippolytus* or *Phaedra*, 404 – 409, 1050-1114; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (tr.) F. Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), Vol.II, Bk 15, 479-546; Vergil, *Aeneid*, 293, 761-82.

audience should have been familiar with this myth, as is evidenced by a second-century sarcophagus and a *terra sigillata italica* cup, both found at Tarraco, which were decorated with Hippolytus' story.⁸¹

It is likely that the Hippolytus martyred and celebrated in Rome was the Novatian presbyter commemorated in an epigram by Damasus, the Pope responsible for erecting memorials and inscriptions to martyrs around Rome - probably those Prudentius reported as being seen by him as he searched the city. A further candidate is the martyr Hippolytus, who was buried on the Via Tiburtina, according to the *Depositio Martyrum* of 354AD. This martyr is often associated with the presbyter Hippolytus, exiled with Pope Pontianus to Sardinia in 235AD (see below for evidence connecting these two).⁸² Prudentius also seems to have been aware of a third-century bishop Hippolytus martyred at Portus, which might be the reason for the poet locating the saint's death at the mouth of the Tiber.⁸³ However, we should not focus too much on the identity of the martyr actually buried in the tomb. What matters is Prudentius' belief (and the spiritual experience engendered by that belief) that he was in the presence of the relics of a saint called Hippolytus whose martyrdom he saw represented at a Roman catacomb shrine.

That Prudentius read Damasus' epigram and was influenced by it is demonstrated by the emphasis in his own poem on the Novatianism of Hippolytus.⁸⁴ Novatian had been a mid-third-century rigorist who believed that those who had apostatised under persecution should not be received back into the church.⁸⁵ Damasus' inscription focused on Hippolytus' decision to break with this schism and "when asked by the people which way to choose he answered that the Catholic faith should be followed

⁸¹ Illustration 13, Appendix B; García y Bellido, *Escultura Romanas*, 244-53; see also Chapter 5, 170 below; G. Baratta, 'Un primo approccio all' iconografia del mito di Ippolito sulla ceramica di *Gaius Valerius Verdullus*', *Kalakorikos* 15 (2010), 109-120, fig.8 at 115 shows the Tarraco cup. This paper has some local Prudentian interest as it focuses on a 1st century vase made by a Calagurris potter, found at nearby Vareia, which it is thought possibly depicts the Hippolytus myth as sourced from Seneca.

⁸² Bertonière, *Cult Center*, 27. The *Depositio Martyrum* states: IDUS AUG, Ypoliti in Tiburtina; et Pontiani in Calisti; *Liber Pontificalis*, 145, 19. This records Pontianus' death on Sardinia and his return for burial in the cemetery of Callistus. The assumption is that the body of Hippolytus was returned at the same time.

⁸³ Lavarenne, *Prudence*, 163.

⁸⁴ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 370, lines 19-20).

⁸⁵ Jerome, *de viris inlustribus*, Novatian, no.70, 40-41.

by all”.⁸⁶ Prudentius places the same sentiment in the mouth of Hippolytus when speaking to his people: “shun the accursed schism of Novatus and return to orthodoxy”.⁸⁷ Prudentius’ avowal to promote orthodox belief, evidenced in his *Praefatio*, is reflected again in these words.⁸⁸ Prudentius’ concern over unsound belief, often demonstrated elsewhere in his works, may have been exacerbated by the recent furore in Hispania over the religious leader Priscillian who had been accused of heresy, and was ultimately executed for magical wrongdoing, *maleficium*, in 386AD.⁸⁹ Prudentius would have known that Priscillian, even in death, continued to attract followers who revered him as a martyr and it is tempting to see Prudentius’ emphasis on Hippolytus’ schismatic lapse as a warning to his Spanish audience to beware of being drawn into unorthodox beliefs. The poet’s closing words to Valerianus to beware of the wolf who might take one of his lambs, seem to confirm Prudentius’ fears of heresy and schism in Hispania.

Hippolytus, however, had repented of his doctrinal errors and had gone on to suffer and die for the true faith. Like Cassian he had overcome a flawed past and, in Prudentius’ eyes, had redeemed himself by his final sacrifice. Prudentius’ closing plea that Hippolytus should be venerated in Hispania was answered, for we know that soon after, unlike Cassian, Saint Hippolytus entered into the liturgy of the Spanish church in Tarraconensis.⁹⁰ Whether or not Prudentius’ words accelerated this accolade, we cannot tell, and so we can only suppose that his impassioned and eloquent ekphrasis of the martyrdom of Hippolytus might have brought the saint to be honoured in Prudentius’ own land.

⁸⁶ As translated in Sághy, ‘*Scinditur in partes populus*’, at 284; *Epigrammata Damasiana*, 171, 35: “Quaesisset populus ubinam procedere posset, Catholicam dixisse fidem sequerentur ut omnes”.

⁸⁷ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 371, lines 29-30): “Fugite ... execranda Novati scismata, catholicis reddite”.

⁸⁸ *Praef.* (CCSL 126: 2, line 39): “Pugnet contra hereses, catholicam discutiat fidem”.

⁸⁹ See Chapter 2, 76-7 for further discussion of Prudentius vis-a-vis Priscillian.

⁹⁰ Eugenius, *Ep. 3* (PL 87:412); J. Sales Carbonell, *Arqueología de les seus episcopal tardoantigues al territori català (259-713)* (Barcelona: Societat Catalana d’Arqueologia, 2011), 111. It has been proposed but not proven that a Visigothic church was also dedicated to Hippolytus in Tarraco.

IV. Pictures painted in Words

That Prudentius had acquired the rhetorical talents to successfully argue the case for devotion to the cult of Hippolytus is made apparent from the preface to his works where he details the manner of his early education and subsequent career as an advocate.⁹¹ During the course of this training he would have learned how to compose an ekphrasis – a descriptive speech whose function was to bring its subject-matter vividly before the eyes – an oratorical skill which, as we have seen, he put to good effect in composing *Peristephanon* IX and XI. This is the definition which appears in the Greek handbooks on rhetoric, the *Progymnasmata*, which contained exercises to educate the young Greco-Roman elite. Surviving handbooks by Theon (first century), Ps.-Hermogenes (second/third century), Aphthonius (fourth century) and Nikolaos (fifth century) all agree on this, with the emphasis being placed on the need for clarity (*sapheneia*) and especially vividness (*enargeia*) in the ekphrasis.⁹² The quality of *enargeia* is also emphasised in Latin sources, notably the first-century *Institutio Oratoria* of Quintilian, as being essential in order to make the audience ‘see’ the subject of the speaker’s words.⁹³ Utilising this quality of *enargeia*, and again reflecting the words of Quintilian, Prudentius aimed to arouse the emotions of his audience by conveying to them visualisations, *phantasiai*, of what he claimed to have seen in the martyr paintings.⁹⁴ Quintilian, like Prudentius, hailed from Calagurris, and therefore it seems probable that the poet was familiar with his instructions, particularly since Ausonius, who was Prudentius’ contemporary, acknowledged Quintilian’s continuing rhetorical influence in Southern Gaul.⁹⁵

The limitation of ekphrasis to the description of works of art is a comparatively modern presumption.⁹⁶ The various versions of the *Progymnasmata* stated that a variety of subjects could be offered by an author within the concept, although four

⁹¹ *Praef.* (CCSL 126: 1, lines 8-9, 13-15) on his education and career.

⁹² Webb, *Ekphrasis*, Appendix A, 197-205. Theon and Ps.-Hermogenes in particular value clarity and vividness above all, 198, 200.

⁹³ Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, 443, 8.3.61-2.

⁹⁴ See R. Webb, ‘Imagination and the arousal of emotions in Greco-Roman rhetoric’, in S. Braund and C. Gill (eds.), *The Passions in Rome: Thought and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 112-27, in particular Webb’s lucid translation of Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, 6.2.29. “We name *visiones* what the Greeks call *phantasiai* and it is through these that images of absent things are represented to the mind in such a way that we seem to see them with our eyes and to be in their presence”, at 118.

⁹⁵ Ausonius, *Opera*, 5, *Commemoratio Professorum*, 1.

⁹⁶ See R. Webb, ‘Ekphrasis ancient and modern: the invention of a genre’, *Word and Image*, 15, 1 (1999), 7-18, for the word’s more modern usage.

categories appear as stable elements: persons (*prosopa*); places (*topoi*); times (*kairoi*); and events (*pragmata*).⁹⁷ Nikolaos' fifth-century handbook was the first known to specifically give instructions on the ekphrasis of paintings, which emphasize the causative and resultant emotions which should be built in to the description. He states: "we must ... try to add reasons why the painter ... depicted the character as angry from ... a cause or happy, or we will mention some other emotion resulting from the story about the person being described. Reasons contribute greatly to the *enargeia*".⁹⁸ The recommendations of the handbooks regarding *pragmata* are also relevant when considering Prudentius' work in that they advise that a temporal programme should be followed so that what led up to the central event and also what followed was included in the ekphrasis.⁹⁹ This structure has much in common with Prudentius' ekphraseis which described narrations of sequences of events, rather than static scenes.

Echoes of other writers appear in Prudentius' ekphraseis. This does not negate the probability that he had seen the paintings at the martyrs' tombs, but strengthens the likelihood that he was influenced by his educational background and the burgeoning literature associated with the martyr cults. He must have encountered the many examples of the ekphrasis of paintings found in classical literature. Inevitably Vergil's ekphrasis of the temple of Juno, where Aeneas was brought to tears by the images of the sufferings of the Trojans depicted there, as a comparison, comes to mind.¹⁰⁰ In this the poet describes, amongst the carnage of battle, the boy Troilus carried along by his horses, his neck and hair dragging over the ground, presenting a verbal image similar to that of Prudentius' portrayal of Hippolytus' death.¹⁰¹ Other authors, particularly from the period of the Second Sophistic, made use of the genre: Achilles Tatius prefixed his romantic novel of Leucippe and Clitophon with an ekphrasis of a votive picture showing Europa riding the bull across the waves of the Phoenician sea; Longus' ekphrasis purported to tell the love story of Daphnis and Chloe as portrayed in a beautiful painting which he saw in a wood; in contrast the *Tabula of Cebes* was a religious-philosophical text which describes a depiction of a

⁹⁷ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 56, 61-86 on the subjects of ekphrasis. See her Appendix A, 197-205, for specific subjects recommended in the four *Progymnasmata* - for example, such diverse entities as priests, cities, seasons, battles and festivals.

⁹⁸ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, Nikolaos, 203.

⁹⁹ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 67-8.

¹⁰⁰ Vergil, *Aeneid*, 1, 29-31, 441-93.

¹⁰¹ Vergil, *Aeneid*, 1, 31, 474-8.

series of enclosures allegorically representing life, which if correctly comprehended would lead to salvation and happiness for the viewer.¹⁰² As in the case of Cassian's story, these texts also required a fortuitous viewing of the image and a figure with an interpretive role.

The second-century writer Philostratus the Elder was probably the most noted exponent of this form of literary art. The *Imagines* is a work which consists of a series of vivid ekphraseis of paintings showing the stories of gods and heroes which the writer claims to have seen decorating a villa in Naples.¹⁰³ In this work Philostratus also took the role of exegete, guiding young boys, who effectively represented his external audience, through the significance of the images. These texts were not static descriptions, but narratives which moved through time and space:

Philostratos concentrates on retelling the narratives depicted, constantly slipping from the material plane of the particular painting to the events behind. He situates the individual scenes within their narrative contexts, so that it is often unclear which particular moment is supposed to be depicted; figures are described as if they were moving, acting and feeling. His audience is also made to see more than would be visible in the painting; the sophist conjures up unseen figures and evokes appeals to senses other than sight.¹⁰⁴

These words by James and Webb are apposite to describe the very attributes which Prudentius brings to his own ekphraseis, where emotions are evoked and actions and histories of the protagonists are portrayed which could not actually have been seen in the tomb paintings themselves.

¹⁰² Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* (tr.) S. Gaselee (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1917), 1,3-5 (and included a further ekphrasis of paintings found in a temple depicting Andromeda and Perseus, 7,8, 146-53); Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* (tr.) P. Turner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 17; *Tabula of Cebes* (tr.) J. Fitzgerald, L. White (Chicago: Scholars Press, 1983). See J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) for a detailed analysis of this text, 39-48.

¹⁰³ Philostratus, *Imagines* (tr.) A. Fairbanks (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931)

¹⁰⁴ E. James, R. Webb, ' "To understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places": Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium', *Art History*, 14 (1991), 1-17, at 7.

We can plausibly suppose that Prudentius might have known of this prime example of the ekphrasis of works of art. Of note within Philostratus' gallery is a description of the death of Hippolytus, although this is the Hippolytus of myth. There are strong similarities between Prudentius' ekphrasis of the Christian Hippolytus and that of Philostratus' pagan. In the latter's work the horses drawing Hippolytus' chariot are "overcome with panic and terror", so that the youth is thrown into the dirt, where his limbs are torn off and crushed.¹⁰⁵ However, there is also every probability that both authors were influenced by an established legend of Hippolytus enshrined in the plays of Euripides and Seneca and the verses of Ovid and Vergil. Prudentius, like the sophist, was directing his verses to an educated audience whose familiarity with classical works, including probably those of Philostratus himself, would have enabled them to respond to the textual echoes of ancient ekphrasis in Prudentius' poetry and may have predisposed them to receive his Christian message. As Quintilian wrote: "every man applies whatever he hears to his own experience, and the mind finds it easiest to accept what it can recognise".¹⁰⁶

Following in the path of their classical forebears, Christian writers, as well as Prudentius, also used the techniques of ekphrasis to bring representations of works of art before the eyes of their listeners, although now the subject matter was Christian. The genre may have come to fruition during the Second Sophistic, but it continued to flourish in the fourth and fifth centuries.¹⁰⁷ An ekphrasis of Bishop Asterius of Amasea, writing around 400AD, can most closely be compared to those of Prudentius, although it should be noted that he was writing in the Eastern rather than the Western Empire. Asterius described how in a church he saw and was overwhelmed by a depiction of the story of the martyrdom of Saint Euphemia of Chalcedon which was painted "with vigour on a canvas" placed "near to the holy tomb".¹⁰⁸ As with Prudentius, it is difficult to recognise the subject of Asterius' ekphrasis as a single static picture since within it the fearless virgin martyr moves physically from judgement through sickening torture, (her teeth are cut out), then prison, to her death. Like Prudentius again, Asterius wept over the saint's suffering he sees: "The painter has indeed depicted the drops of blood with such realism that

¹⁰⁵ Philostratus, *Imagines*, 2.4, 142-3.

¹⁰⁶ Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, 445, 8.3.71, lines 11-12, "ad se refert quisque quae audit, et id facillime accipiunt animi quod agnoscunt" (tr.) Russell.

¹⁰⁷ J. Leemans et al., *'Let us die'*, 34.

¹⁰⁸ Asterius of Amasea, 'On the Holy Martyr Euphemia', in Leemans et al., *'Let us die'*, 174-6.

you would say they really stream from her lips”.¹⁰⁹ Although, again, as in the case of Prudentius and his descriptions of the tomb paintings, one is left wondering to what extent Asterius’ impassioned and detailed narrative matched the reality of what he saw. Nevertheless, Asterius’ ekphrasis is interspersed throughout with affirmations of his visual experience and the painter’s work: “I shall describe the painting”; “this is the masterpiece”; “the representation continues.”¹¹⁰ In spite of this, Asterius, from the outset makes it clear that his talent is of equal importance to that of the painter, and “we - children of the muses (i.e. writers) - have in no way less satisfying colours than painters”.¹¹¹ Therefore, to take this further (and this is relevant again to the martyr poems of Prudentius): “an especially successful verbal description is capable of effectively supplanting the artistic representation”.¹¹² The potency of Asterius’ ekphrasis lies in his ability to position, according to Cox Miller, “the reader” or listener “as an active participant in the creation of an aesthetics of relics as he is placed in the complicated space of the painting/writing of Asterius at Euphemia’s tomb”.¹¹³

Gregory of Nyssa, writing some twenty years earlier than Asterius, and like Asterius a writer in the East, had glowingly praised a painting of the martyr Theodore the Recruit which he saw decorating the saint’s shrine.¹¹⁴ According to him it realistically depicted the martyr’s deeds, his judgement and the pain he suffered by fire, culminating in the saint’s reception by Christ in heaven. The ekphrasis of the shrine, however, only takes up a small part of Gregory’s festal homily, which also contains the conventional reference to the tearful pleas and emotions of the devotees at the shrine. He does, however, speak of the power of art to inspire these worshippers, stating that “even though it remains silent, painting can speak on the wall and be of the greatest profit”.¹¹⁵ Similar sentiments are found in a homily of Basil of Caesarea which commemorates the deaths of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste by exposure. Basil expresses the opinion that a painting which portrays the bravery of martyrs can motivate its viewers to imitate in their lives those who are

¹⁰⁹ Asterius, ‘Euphemia’, 176, 4.

¹¹⁰ Asterius, ‘Euphemia’, 175.1,2,4.

¹¹¹ Asterius, ‘Euphemia’, 175. 1.

¹¹² E. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 129.

¹¹³ Cox Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 69.

¹¹⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, ‘Homily on Theodore the Recruit’, in Leemans et al., ‘*Let us die*’ 85.

¹¹⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, ‘Theodore’, 85.

nobler than they are.¹¹⁶ In addition to showing the existence of Christian ekphraseis of art, these descriptions seem to provide independent textual evidence for violent representations of martyr deaths being used as decoration at Christian sites in the fourth century, and for the inspirational value of these images for the viewer.

We should not forget that in addition to his poems on Cassian and Hippolytus Prudentius also wrote ekphrastic epigrams associated with images on the subject of other martyrs. As noted above, these were included in the *Tituli Historiarum* or *Dittochaeon*, a series of forty-eight verses, based on events in the Old and New Testament, apparently functioning as *tituli* for pictures presumably to be shown on a Christian edifice of some kind. Short poems on the passions of John the Baptist and Saint Stephen (“the first to wear the crown”) and the crucifixion of Christ appear in this group - the latter, strikingly, referring to one of the robbers crucified alongside Christ as a martyr.¹¹⁷ As in the case of the *Peristephanon* IX and XI we cannot tell for sure if the pictures described in these poems were real, or whether they were textual images designed to stimulate the audience. There is little physical evidence in Hispania or Gaul to support them existing there during Prudentius’ lifetime, although we should not exclude this possibility.¹¹⁸ We do, however, have material evidence in Italy for the actuality of the martyr paintings at the Italian shrines, which will be discussed in the next section. This might help in assessing whether Prudentius could have viewed the images of Saints Cassian and Hippolytus as he described them, rather than the poems being largely the products of a spiritually active mind and a talented pen.

V. The Actuality of the Martyr Paintings

What Prudentius actually did see in his visit to Cassian’s and Hippolytus’ shrines may have been the images as he described them in his poems. If the paintings did not exist, there seems no rationale for not telling the stories of the deaths of Cassian and

¹¹⁶ Basil of Caesarea, ‘Homily on the Forty Martyrs’, in Leemans et al., *‘Let us die’*, 68-9.

¹¹⁷ *Tituli Hist.* XXXIV, Passio Iohannis (CCSL 126:396-7, 133-6); XLIV, Passio Stefani (CCSL 126:399,180): “O primae...coronae”; XLII, Passio Salvatoris (CCSL 126: 398,167-8): “duo...latrones...fert iste coronam”.

¹¹⁸ Particularly since crucifixion imagery was unusual at this time, A.Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of its Origins* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 131-2; although not containing martyr deaths Paulinus’ description of biblical stories depicted on a frieze at his church at Nola in Italy seems to correspond with the kind of epigrammatic decoration Prudentius might have conceived, Paulinus, *Carmina*, 27 (CSEL 30: 285-8, 511-95).

Hippolytus in the manner of the rest of the *Peristephanon* poems. If rhetorical effect was needed, ekphraseis of the events (*pragmata*) themselves, rather than images, could have sufficed.¹¹⁹ He most likely did witness the depictions which inspired him to write the ekphraseis, but to what extent these resembled what he saw in reality is a moot point. By examining fourth and early fifth-century extant works of art, however, it is feasible for us to conjecture what Prudentius might have seen, in order to envisage the kind of images he was trying to communicate with his words back to his Spanish audience. (I limit my survey to this period, since to look back from artistic developments which happened further into the fifth century and beyond would be teleological). It is possible that the scenarios may have been artificial constructs and the paintings, in whole or in part, products of the poet's imagination or visual memories. In fact we cannot be certain that these types of images existed as yet, but the power of Prudentius' writing may have created them and made them live in his words. To quote Aline Rousselle: "there was no need for the works of art as described in *ekphrasis* to have existed at all".¹²⁰

It is also possible that Prudentius' experiences of the iconography, both religious and secular, of his homeland, Hispania, may have subliminally contributed to the content of his ekphraseis. In particular, the non-Christian visual landscape of Hispania was rich in art which promoted the myths of the gods, as found, for example, in villas, temples and on funerary memorials, and we should factor this into our understanding of how the poet viewed and recorded the images at the martyr tombs in Italy. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five, where we will also consider how his audience in Hispania would have understood the ekphraseis of the paintings as presented to them in Prudentius' verses.

Nevertheless, in spite of these qualifying factors, it is necessary to examine the material evidence for what Prudentius might possibly have seen in Italy. By this means we can understand what might have caused the emotional reaction he had to the paintings that he saw at the tombs, and perhaps comprehend the inspiration he gained from his proximity to the resting places of the holy and the impulse to write

¹¹⁹ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 64, for a table of subjects appropriate for ekphrasis, e.g. subjects included in Libanios' corpus include descriptions of battles and a hunt, 61-2. See above, n.97.

¹²⁰ A. Rousselle, 'Images as education in the Roman Empire (Second-Third centuries AD)', in Yun Lee Too (ed.), *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 371-403, at 382.

the poems. There is no reason to doubt that Prudentius did, in fact, visit Italy.¹²¹ In *Peristephanon* IX, he tells us that he made a journey to Rome, stopping on the way at Forum Corneli, where he made his inspirational visit to Cassian's tomb.¹²² As described in *Peristephanon* XII he arrived in Rome, an enthusiastic religious tourist, and saw the excited crowds thronging the streets, rejoicing as they celebrated the festival of Saints Peter and Paul.¹²³ He explored the city searching for the many inscriptions memorialising martyrs, so that he might give an account of them to his bishop back in Hispania.¹²⁴ The memorials Prudentius writes about must have been the work of the Spanish bishop of Rome, Damasus (366-384AD) who had assiduously promoted the cult of martyr worship and had sought out and renovated sites of martyr burials all over Rome, inscribing them with poetic encomia composed by himself.¹²⁵ Although it is difficult to determine the location of Cassian's shrine in Forum Corneli, it seems probable that, as discussed above, Prudentius discovered Damasus' epigram to Hippolytus at the martyr's tomb. We should therefore look at physical evidence for the likely resting place of Hippolytus among the catacombs of Rome.

A catacomb on the Via Tiburtina is generally assumed to be the resting place of the saint called Hippolytus celebrated by Prudentius. He seems to have been the presbyter, exiled to Sardinia, probably dying there alongside Pope Pontianus in 235AD, who was reported in the *Depositio Martyrum* as being buried in the Tiburtina catacomb.¹²⁶ Unfortunately the Novatianist controversy occurred after 249AD, thus making it likely that the schismatic Hippolytus was not the same figure, and that there was some confusion on the part of Damasus over the identity of the

¹²¹ A prolonged stay by Prudentius in Milan is not evidenced by his verses. Cf. Palmer, *Prudentius*, 31.

¹²² *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126:326, lines 1-3).

¹²³ *Pe. XII* (CCSL 126:379, line 2): "Romam per omnem cursitant ovantque". This poem seems to place Prudentius' visit to the first years of the fifth-century as he describes the church of St. Paul; R. Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, 5 (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1959-77), 98, refers to a later inscription on Paul's church: 'Theodosius coepit, perfecit Honorius'. He assumes that the "princeps bonus has sacravit arces" and who decorated it - and who is referred to by Prudentius in *Pe. XII* (CCSL 126: 380, lines 47-8) - must be Honorius; see also G. Bertonière, *Cult Center*, 35; cf. Jill Harries in 'Prudentius and Theodosius' inclines to a date c.391-5AD, with Theodosius as the "princeps bonus", 72-3.

¹²⁴ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 370, lines 1-12).

¹²⁵ *Liber Pontificalis*, 212, 39.7-8. "Hic multa corpora sanctorum requisivit et invenit, quorum etiam versibus declaravit"; In *Epigrammata Damasiana*, xii - xiv, Ferrua lists 59 certain locations for these inscriptions.

¹²⁶ *Liber Pontificalis*, 145.19, 2-3. "Pontianus episcopus et Hippolytus presbyter exilio sunt deportatiin Sardinia". Pontianus was beaten to death but his body was returned to Rome by ship (presumably with Hippolytus) and buried in the cemetery of Callistus, 145.19, 4-7. See n.82 above.

saint in his epigram.¹²⁷ However, this is unlikely to have been of consequence to Damasus, who was more interested in the religious power conveyed by the saint's remains than historical accuracy.¹²⁸ Although, pieces of Damasus' inscription were found around 1850, not at the tomb, but at the church of Saint John Lateran, a further inscription which does associate Damasus with the shrine was found at the Tiburtina site.¹²⁹ This, albeit damaged, read "... renovating decorations of work done at the house of the martyr Hippolytus arose on the authority of Damasus ...".¹³⁰ It therefore seems reasonable to suppose that Prudentius was referring to the Via Tiburtina catacomb in his poem. His description of the descent by winding steps into narrow dark galleries, lit by intermittent skylights, to the place where the body of Hippolytus had come to rest, captures the sensations which even today can be felt in the caverns of the catacombs.¹³¹

Bertonière's study of this catacomb has established evidence of the existence of the remains of a small crypt which he believes was the site of the martyr's tomb and the one which Prudentius saw. This structure, described as the "final phase of an earlier cult centre" as restored by Damasus and Leo, was then extensively extended and remodelled around 407AD.¹³² This programme, together with subsequent destruction and alterations, has destroyed the original smaller crypt to the extent that it is now only by looking at surviving catacombs one can assess what the tomb space might have looked like and how it might have been decorated. Bertonière's evidence, however, points to the tomb being in a relatively small space like the *cubicula* - the chambers which one can still see in other catacombs - and situated in the wall in a *mensa* tomb or within an arched niche or *arcosolium*.¹³³ These *cubicula*, leading off galleries like those described by Prudentius, could often be monumental in character

¹²⁷ Lavarenne, *Prudence*, 162.

¹²⁸ Sághy, 'Pope Damasus', 286-7.

¹²⁹ Bertonière, *Cult Center*, 27-30. This second inscription seems to have been commemorating restoration work by a presbyter Leo.

¹³⁰ *Epigrammata Damasiana*, 173, as reconstructed: "Renovata domus martyris ippoliti ornamenta operis surgunt auctore damaso."

¹³¹ *Pe.XI* (CCSL 126:375, lines 155-170). Prudentius' words are reminiscent of Jerome, who describes the horrible darkness of the underground crypts, lit only by the occasional light from above. Jerome, 1, *Opera exegetica*, 4, *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem Libri XIV* (CCSL 75: 556-7, 243-254).

¹³² Bertonière, *Cult Center*, 136, 182; 43, ICUR 7, n.19961, 407AD.

¹³³ V.Fiocchi Nicolai, F.Bisconti, D.Mazzoleni, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome; History, Decoration, Inscriptions* (Regensburg: Schnell and Steiner, 2002). Chapter 1 gives details of the structure and development of the Roman catacombs; Bertonière, *Cult Center*, suggests that the tomb was more likely a 'tomba a mensa' or a 'loculus' which ties in with Prudentius' reference to a "mensa" in his description of the tomb, *Pe.XI* (CCSL 126:375., line 171).

and frequently contained painted images. Prudentius' description of the shrine itself also resembles the remains of *cubicula* found in other catacombs. Although any silver decor which might have been there would be long gone, there is evidence in these spaces of elaborate *opus sectile* marble plaques on walls and floors.¹³⁴ These were usually in light colours, which were designed to reflect the light from skylights and lamps, like the "shining white plates" of Hippolytus' tomb.¹³⁵ Although no traces remain of the above-ground basilica, the similarity between Prudentius' description of the tomb and archaeological evidence gives credence to the likelihood that Prudentius visited this site, or one similar, in Rome.¹³⁶ Thus, enclosed in the gleaming heart of the shrine, he could have reacted to the power of the painting and been inspired to communicate to his audience the concept of visual stimulation as a tool of Christian mission, in the same way as it had been used before to propagate traditional Greco-Roman beliefs.

Nevertheless, as noted above, doubts have been cast as to whether Prudentius could possibly have seen martyr paintings which contained the elaborate and realistic narrative iconography which he described. His ekphraseis have been criticized as failing to match the known art of the period in Italy. Lawrence Nees, on the subject of the Cassian ekphrasis suggests that "it is surely a mistake to take Prudentius at his word; the detailed and graphic verbal description he provides is exactly what cannot be paralleled in early Christian images".¹³⁷ There is, in fact, physical evidence for early Christian images in Rome and Italy which feature elements substantiating the proposition that Prudentius viewed analogous imagery. The first decorative Christian art appeared in the early third century and covered the walls and ceilings of the Roman catacombs, although stylistic similarities indicate that they were probably executed by artists from the same workshops who decorated contemporary pagan

¹³⁴ Fiocchi Nicolai et al., *Catacombs*, 84-5. Fig. 94 illustrates a cubicula in the catacomb of SS. Pietro e Marcellino with marble opus sectile cover on the walls and pavement.

¹³⁵ Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, 'Theodore', in Leemans et al., *Let us die*, 85, 62.25, who says the stones of Theodore's tomb were "polished" ... "until they had the smoothness of silver". Therefore it is possible that some of Prudentius' 'silver' was actually polished marble.

¹³⁶ Bertonière, *Cult Center*, at 185 re the basilica. It has been suggested that the basilica could have been that of St. Laurence which lay only 400 metres away, 41.

¹³⁷ L.Nees, *Early Medieval Art* (Oxford:Oxford University Press,2002) 210-1. According to Nees, "rigid frontality and formality" were typical of early Christian art; Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 116, n.32, on the debate over the 'reality' of the paintings.

tombs.¹³⁸ Among the floral, zoomorphic and geometric motifs derived from the Greco-Roman tradition now appeared symbols of salvation, often representations from the Old and New Testament, common to the iconography seen on the earliest sarcophagi imported into Hispania.¹³⁹ These earliest images tended to be minimal, decorative and symbolic features or figures or figure groups located within red and green linear frames.¹⁴⁰ This type of minimalist illustration, however, does not gel with our received impressions of the appearance of the martyr paintings presented by Prudentius' poems. Nonetheless, this style of abbreviated painting did evolve into a more elaborate descriptive and narrative type within the catacombs, which furnishes a closer match to the complex imagery provided by Prudentius.¹⁴¹

As the fourth century progressed the repertoire of paintings in the catacombs at Rome changed to include a wider range of Old and New Testament themes. The image of Christ is newly depicted as a teacher or shown in triumph; Peter and Paul feature more prominently; and Roman saints and martyrs now form part of the iconography.¹⁴² Before the latter images appeared it seems likely that martyr iconography in the catacombs was symbolically represented by scenes of sacrifice and deliverance from the Old Testament. Depictions such as those of Daniel in the lion's den and the sacrifice of Isaac provided models for martyr ideology. The three Hebrew youths, sent into the fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar for refusing to worship a false god, also appear. These were specifically mentioned by the third-century writer Origen in his 'Exhortation to Martyrdom' as apposite to Christians of his day, and similarly Tertullian used this story to inspire courage in his flock in times of persecution.¹⁴³ The painting which decorated Hippolytus' tomb could have been made at any time between the mid-third century, when Hippolytus probably died, and the papacy of Damasus, when the tomb was renovated, or even after that

¹³⁸ J. Spier, 'The Earliest Christian Art: from Personal Salvation to Imperial Power' in J. Spier (ed), *Picturing the Bible: The Earliest Christian Art* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 1-23, at 7; P. Finney, *The Invisible God: The earliest Christians on Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) describes the imagery in the Callistus catacomb as the birth of Christian art, at 146; However, in the East the baptistery at Dura Europos in Syria, which was decorated with biblical scenes, must challenge this presumption since the town was destroyed by the 250's, AD. See C. Kraeling, *The Christian Building* (New Haven: Dura-Europos Publications, 1967), 204-227 on the decorations of the Dura Baptistery; Illustration 16, Appendix B: the women at Christ's tomb.

¹³⁹ Flocchi Nicolai et al, *Catacombs*, 97.

¹⁴⁰ Finney, *Invisible God*, 191

¹⁴¹ Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 95.

¹⁴² Spier, 'Earliest Christian Art', 7.

¹⁴³ Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 131 and 181, n.96 references Origen, *Exhort. ad mart.* 33, and Tertullian, *Scorpiace*, 8.

time, on his authority. However, as there is no evidence for Roman martyr images until the fourth century, when the martyr cult began to evolve, it is probable that it must be attributed to the later period.

Even during the later fourth century at Rome (and elsewhere in the Empire) there is a dearth of extant imagery showing the act of martyrdom. Existing pictures which can be identified as martyrs tend to be static devotional representations. In the catacomb of Commodilla the Roman saints, Adauctus and Felix, are depicted standing on either side of Christ, lifting their crowns as symbols of their martyrdom.¹⁴⁴ In their eponymous catacomb the saints Peter and Marcellinus, together with the martyrs Tiburtius and Gorgonius, raise their hands in acclamation to Christ who sits above them in majesty between Peter and Paul.¹⁴⁵ In the catacomb of Domitilla at Rome, Saint Petronilla, her rank confirmed by the caption ‘mart(yr)’, acts in the role of intercessor and leads the deceased woman, Veneranda, into heaven.¹⁴⁶ There is a suggestion that a fresco in the catacomb of Saint Thecla depicting a male figure manhandling a veiled female may perhaps depict a scene of the saint’s martyrdom.¹⁴⁷ More securely, however, an image which indicates that violent scenes of martyr death were represented in the catacombs, albeit not in fresco form, can be found at the cult site of Nereus and Achilleus, in the catacomb of Domitilla. At this site, which was improved and enlarged in the second half of the fourth century, possibly at Damasus’ behest, two columns were discovered. One of these is sculpted with the scene of a figure, his hands bound, seemingly in the act of fleeing, about to be executed by a soldier. Above it is the name of ‘Acilleus’ together with a *crux invicta* symbolising the martyr’s victory over death.¹⁴⁸

Prudentius’ ekphrasis, set out so vividly in *Peristephanon* XI, as detailed above, describes an image full of action; Hippolytus’ bleeding body is dragged through the landscape by uncontrollable wild horses, it is torn to pieces, his acolytes follow,

¹⁴⁴ J.Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph: The Art of the Roman Empire AD 100-450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 156-7, Fig.104. The emphasis in this cubiculum is on Rome, with images of Christ and of Peter, his successor.

¹⁴⁵ Flocchi Nicolai et al, *Catacombs*, 129.Fig.144.

¹⁴⁶ A.Grabar, *Le Premier Art Chrétien (200-395)* (Paris: Gallimard,1966) 211, Fig.231.

¹⁴⁷ Flocchi Nicolai et al, *Catacombs*, 105, Fig.119; Castelli, in *Martyrdom*, notes an early image, (mid-fourth century) of Thecla in a hypogeum in Thessaloniki, whose iconographic context she associates with ideas of physical suffering and divine escape from death, 157-162.

¹⁴⁸ Illustration 14, Appendix B; Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 129. Damasus’ epitaph for the site ties in with the portrayal of Achilleus’ execution. (It is feasible that this tomb’s renovation was carried out at the same time as that of Hippolytus).

searching for his holy remains. It is possible to take examples from existing catacomb art and extrapolate from them the type of narrative scenes Prudentius might have seen portrayed, thus arguing that his ekphraseis were based on images existing in Italy which he could have seen and verbally preserved for his audience in Hispania. The painting which Prudentius witnessed of Hippolytus' death might have manifested the same kind of vitality and movement shown by the scenes celebrating Moses and the Crossing of the Red Sea in the Via Latina catacomb (c.315-360AD) which "stressed action and the picturesque".¹⁴⁹ It is also still possible to see in catacomb paintings like this the same kind of intense colours such as the deep reds which evoke the *purpureas ... notas* and the *russeolam saniem* which Prudentius admired in the skilful work of Hippolytus' tomb artist.¹⁵⁰

The Red Sea pictures are located in a *cubiculum* containing other scenes of Old Testament images, but another fourth-century Via Latina *cubiculum* is entirely decorated with a linked sequence of events depicting mythological subject-matter. It shows a series of scenes with Hercules depicted in the role of a heroic saviour acting to overcome death. He is shown in subsidiary panels triumphing over his own trials, but the lunettes of the *arcosolia* show the myth of Alcestis, who chose to die in the place of her husband Admetus. She was rescued from death by Hercules who defeated the hound, Cerberus, and restored by him to her husband. Perhaps Hippolytus' tomb was contained in an enclosed area like this, with the scenes of his passion portrayed on the walls surrounding his tomb. If the occupant of this *cubiculum* were Christian, rather than pagan, the Hercules cycle could be seen as an allegorical representation of a Christian hero bringing salvation.¹⁵¹ If this is so, it provides us with another way of viewing the problem of disentangling the mythological Hippolytus from the Christian – the former's depiction being seen as an allegorical representation of the latter's suffering. We should also remember, when considering the iconography of the martyr shrine, that according to Prudentius, a "*dives manus*" was the creative force behind the decoration of Hippolytus' tomb.¹⁵² This was perhaps a wealthy benefactor, who, although Christian, was drawn

¹⁴⁹ Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 95. This image shows the Egyptian army tumbling into the sea on one side of the space, while Moses leads the Israelites to freedom on the other.

¹⁵⁰ *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126:374, lines 128-130).

¹⁵¹ See Elsner, *Roman Viewer*, for a syncretising interpretation of the scenes in this *cubiculum* as an attestation of a salvific allegory, 275-81.

¹⁵² *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 376, line 185).

to the tradition of commemorating the dead through the guise of myth and who could have guided the choice of an image which might have appealed to him. Or, as we saw in the case of the mosaicists of Roman homes in Hispania, he could even have been influenced by the artisan, the *fossor*, of the catacomb, in his choice of imagery.¹⁵³

While no catacomb paintings seem to show martyr deaths, there is an extant fourth-century representation of the execution of martyrs which appears as a series of frescoes in a *confessio*, a small room-shrine which contained saintly relics, situated in a house below the later-built church of Saints Giovanni e Paolo in Rome. There is a divergence of opinion as to whether this shrine was part of a house-church, a *domus ecclesiae*, or was a purely private relic chapel for the owners of the house, which formed no part of a communal church.¹⁵⁴ Whatever the shrine's exact status (private or public), it seems the closest extant example in form and function to the shrine of Cassian which Prudentius described in *Peristephanon* IX, showing as it does violent acts being perpetrated against martyrs. Only two of three tiers of painting remain, the upper tier being destroyed. In the centre of the highest remaining tier in the rear wall is a small niche which must have contained the holy relics. On its left appear to be three figures under arrest, and on the right these three are shown bound and kneeling, about to be executed. Had the upper tier not been lost a fuller narrative might have been revealed as well as the identity of the martyrs.¹⁵⁵ The centre of the lower tier contains images of the house's owners or senior church members prostrating themselves before a figure in orant pose, probably one of the martyrs whose relics were contained in the shrine. Hahn points out that the saint does not lift his eyes to heaven, but looks out towards his viewer in his role as intercessor for the supplicants.¹⁵⁶ The prostrate postures of the devotees before the orant figure are strongly reminiscent of the way in which Prudentius describes himself bowed down before the tombs of Cassian and Hippolytus, and reflects a similar relationship

¹⁵³ Chapter 2, 52 and also Chapter 5, 182-3.

¹⁵⁴ C.Hahn, 'Seeing and Believing: the Construction of Sanctity in Early Medieval Saints' Shrines', *Speculum*, 72 (1997), 1079-1106, at 1093, takes the view that this was a house-church; Bowes, *Private Worship*, leans more to the theory that this was a private reliquary shrine, 88.

¹⁵⁵ For full illustration see Grig, *Making Martyrs*, Pl.1, and 122 for discussion of the saints' identity.

Also Bowes, *Private Worship*, 89 in particular, n.166.

¹⁵⁶ Hahn, 'Seeing and Believing', 1094-5.

between these supplicants and their saint.¹⁵⁷ This *confessio* is evidence for the existence, contemporary to Prudentius, of the type of shrine which he encountered at Forum Cornelia and establishes a strong possibility that when there he witnessed a similar space.

In the only early extant illustration of Prudentius' text, Cassian's story was told in a series of vital and active sketches in a ninth-century manuscript. The first in the sequence is an illustration of Prudentius himself prostrate before the tomb. On the next page Cassian is shown seated, teaching his unruly pupils, while below this is an illustration of him being brought bound before the judge. On the opposite page he is shown tortured and killed by his pupils, while above his soul is seen transported to heaven by an angel.¹⁵⁸ Although obviously this is a case of the image reflecting the text, rather than vice-versa, this illustration can give us a way into thinking about how the Cassian painting might have been constructed: a series of comparable scenes displayed around the walls of building, rather than in a book.

As noted above, there is no evidence remaining for the tomb at Forum Cornelia and its associated painting, and little extant physical confirmation of any decorated public martyr shrines in the west which would have existed at the time of Prudentius. There is, however, the example of a decorated martyr-chapel in Milan, dated c.397AD, which held the remains of St. Victor. A mosaic image of the crowned saint holding a cross and framed within a wreath, was situated in a dome high above his burial place.¹⁵⁹ This decorative and inspirational use of mosaic in Christian edifices, which had begun to appear in the fourth century, was to reach its apogee during the ensuing two centuries. Although not funerary or specifically martyr-associated in function, the late fourth-century apse mosaic of St. Pudenziana is the finest early example of this. Christ enthroned beneath a great cross is central to this work, however the martyrs Peter and Paul are placed, wreathed with martyr crowns, on

¹⁵⁷ Illustration 15, Appendix B; *Pe.IX* (CCSL 126: 326, line 5.); *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 376, lines 177-8); see also a fourth-century painting in the Coemeterium Maius catacomb of two figures bowing before another who has raised arms and who has tentatively been identified as Saint Agnes, E. Josi, 'Coemeterium Maius', *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*, 10 (1933), 7-16, at 11-13, fig.6.

¹⁵⁸ L.Nees, *Early Medieval Art*, 210; C.Hahn, 'Picturing the Text: Narrative in the Life of the Saints', *Art History*, Vol.13, 1 (1990), 8-10. The images are illustrated in Prudentius, *Opera*, Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod.264, 119, 120, 121.

¹⁵⁹ P.Cox Miller, '“The little Blue Flower is Red”: Relics and the poetizing of the body', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 8, 2 (2000), 213-236, at 233-4, Fig.2.

either side of their Lord together with the other apostles.¹⁶⁰ Mosaics have survived due to being made of a more durable substance, but one can only surmise what frescoes like those at the Forum Corneliai shrine might have looked like at this time. We do, however, have at least one identifiable representation of the martyr Hippolytus, albeit not within the context of a religious building. Gold glass medallions were produced during the fourth century decorated with portraits of saints and on one of these the image of Hippolytus can be found in company with that of Christ, Paul, Timothy and the martyrs Laurence and Sixtus.¹⁶¹

The above examples of early Christian art indicate the kind of images which Prudentius might have encountered on his Italian travels. The failure to find concrete physical evidence of martyrial art which more precisely matches Prudentius' ekphraseis of the passions of Hippolytus and Cassian should not lead one to assume that it was improbable that the poet saw the paintings which he described. Nor should we assume that the martyr scenes could not be sufficient in visual and narrative qualities to inspire the poet in the way they did. We can therefore at least cast into doubt the postulation of Nees that Prudentius cannot be taken at his word.¹⁶² Ultimately, however, our comprehension of the forms of the images as described by Prudentius should not depend on finding representations which correspond to his ekphraseis. The way in which Prudentius saw the paintings was more complex than simple viewing and there are a number of ways of thinking about how he understood the images. Therefore, in the following chapter, I will construct a means by which we can see how the images portrayed in the ekphraseis might be communicated to the members of Prudentius' Hispano-Gallic audience.

¹⁶⁰ Elsner, *Imperial Rome*, 232, Fig.157. Christ and the apostles are shown seated within the confines of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, with a cityscape of Jerusalem behind them – thus emphasising the importance of pilgrimage to holy places which had begun to flourish in the fourth century.

¹⁶¹ As illustrated in Spier, 'Earliest Christian Art', 13, fig.6; see also a representation of another of Prudentius' martyrs, Agnes, on gold glass in orant pose found in situ in a Roman cemetery, Fiocchi Nicolai et al., *Catacombs*, 81, fig. 87; what is possibly a similar glass decorated with an orant and chi-rho was found in fourth/early fifth century Córdoba, Chapter 3 above, 113, n.159.

¹⁶² Nees, *Early Medieval Art*, 210-1.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRUDENTIUS' POETRY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE VISUAL CULTURE OF HISPANIA

I. Introduction: A Clash of Visual Cultures?

In the last chapter we saw Prudentius responding spiritually and emotionally to paintings of the martyrdom of Cassian and Hippolytus which he reportedly witnessed at holy sites when travelling in Italy.¹ In his poems celebrating these two saints, *Peristephanon* IX and XI, Prudentius presented images of the martyrs' suffering as ekphraseis - describing what he apparently saw to an audience which, as I have argued in earlier chapters, was located initially in Hispania. The vividness, the *enargeia*, of his descriptions was essential in order to convey the significance of the martyrs as intercessors in their relationship with God. These descriptions were, in the words of Patricia Cox Miller, needed to "act directly" on the audience's "physical and emotional sensibilities inducing an empathetic response that opened the devotee to the martyr's passion and spiritual power".²

As already argued, Prudentius' literary output cannot be disassociated from, and must be contextualised within, his physical and cultural environment and that of his audience. This chapter ultimately proposes a means by which, involving visual evidence from their milieu in Hispania, this audience might be able to create pictures in their minds of the Christian martyr images described to them. They would thereby be able to respond to the ekphrastic power of Prudentius' words. Nevertheless, there are problems with the Hispanic material evidence: whilst familiar with the traditions of Roman classical art, Prudentius' Hispano-Gallic audience seem to have had only limited encounters with Christian iconography as a didactic and inspirational force. Thus in order to envisage the images described for them by the poet, this audience had to mentally reference the non-Christian traditional art that was familiar to them.

In the fourth and early fifth centuries, however, attitudes to art representing deities and their associates and acolytes were complex and conflicting. How were Hispano-

¹ *Peristephanon* IX (CCSL 126: 326-9) ; *Peristephanon* XI (CCSL 126: 370-8).

² P.Cox Miller, 'Relics, Rhetoric and Mental Spectacles in Late Ancient Christianity' in G. De Nie, K. Morrison (eds.), *Seeing the Invisible in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 25-52, at 39, specifically referencing Cassian's painting.

Romans now to regard these images, both the traditional and the Christian? Were, indeed, images of the Christian holy an acceptable way of reaching out to God?³ These problematic issues were raised by the verses of Prudentius himself; moreover, he presented his audience with messages on the use of images of the divine and their associates which were confusing and contradictory. Although on the one hand he signified the value of the Italian martyr images as visual stimuli in *Peristephanon* IX and XI, on the other, he gave Saint Romanus, in the tenth *Peristephanon* poem, the role of highlighting the dangerously deceptive power of visual art. The saint proclaims the warning that “art is an effective way of propagating wrong belief”.⁴ This declaration forms part of a prolonged attack on the representations of pagan deities and mythic figures, which had served as inspirational tools in supporting traditional non-Christian religions. Through Romanus’ words Prudentius condemns the work of the ancient Greek sculptors who manufactured the substance by which men could perceive the insubstantial, arguing that it was these artists themselves who were, in fact, the fathers of the divinities.⁵ It was their creations which inspired the emotions of the deities’ devotees:

By curling Jupiter’s stiff beard, by gently waving Liber’s flowing locks and by giving a smooth finished look to his hair and ivy-berries, by making Minerva’s breast bristle with snakes, it frightened men and inspired them with a grim terror so that they shudder at a bronze thunderbolt as if it belonged to the Thunderer, stand in dread of the hissing Gorgon’s venom, and think a drunken young man [Bacchus] coming from victories in India can strike

³ Concerns expressed by Augustine in *De consensu evangelistarum*, 1.10:15-16: “Sic omnino errare meruerent, qui Christum et apostolos eius non in sanctis codicibus, sed in pictis parietibus quaesierunt”. “They thoroughly deserve to err who have sought Christ and his Apostles, not in sacred books but in pictures on walls”, in Brown, ‘Images as a substitute for writing’, in Chrysos and Wood, *East and West: Modes of Communication*, 15-35, 28; See also S. Lunn-Rockcliffe, *Ambrosiaster’s Political Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) for the words of another late-fourth-century Christian writer, Ambrosiaster, making this “standard Christian attack”: “The ‘truth of God’ is a lie when a stone is called a ‘god’ ... Thus they have served a created thing rather than the creator”, 164; For further material on this issue, see Elsner, *Imperial Rome*.

⁴ *Peristephanon* X (CCSL 126: 339, line 271): “Ars seminandis efficax erroribus”.

⁵ *Pe* X (CCSL 126: 339, lines 269-270). Here Prudentius states that Myron and Polyclitus were the “origo caelitus” (the source of the heaven-dwellers) and in *Pe* X (CCSL 126: 340, lines 291-3) Mentor and Phidias were “parentes numinum” (fathers of the gods). Prudentius may here be using a literary topos regarding the identity of Greek artists rather than personal knowledge. See, for example, Statius, *Silvae*, 2.2, quoted in P. Stewart, *The Social History of Roman Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 42. See also 19,22; The rhetor Quintilian also praises Myron and Polyclitus, *Inst. Orat.* 12.10, 725, lines 9-10.

them with his thyrsus. And because they see Diana with her dress lifted for easy movement are afraid of the huntress-maid's bow: or if by chance the molten metal with its rippling flow has moulded the features of Hercules to look rather grim, he is believed to be menacing men unless he is worshipped.⁶

Here Prudentius has cited exemplars where artists have constructed images of the gods so realistic that they have had the power to make their viewers believe in the existence of these imagined beings.⁷

Prudentius' condemnation must have given pause to many members of his audience, both Christian and non-Christian. For these individuals images of traditional gods were still a constant presence in their lives as decorative features – not just as statements of religious allegiance. As Peter Brown has emphasised they were symbols of a significant shared culture, *paideia*, which bound together the elite.⁸ Although Brown's essay '*Paideia* and Power' largely confined itself to the Eastern Empire, Prudentius and most of his upper-class compatriots also followed a similar educational path through the schools of grammar and rhetoric as their Greek-speaking equivalents. As leaders of Hispanic society they would also have been inculcated to a high degree in a literary culture based on the traditions of the classical world. As Brown argues:

to treat these works as survivals from an unregenerate pagan past, or as products of mindless traditionalism in the choice of motifs, or as a succession of classical 'revivals' is to misunderstand the power of social relevance of much of secular art of late antiquity...the new elites of the late Roman world may have lived

⁶ *Pe. X* (CCSL 126:339-40, lines 272-285): "Barbam rigentem dum Iovis circumplicat, dum defluentem leniter flectens comam limat capillos et corymbos Liberi, et dum Minervae pectus hydris asperat, iniecit atram territis formidinem, ut fulmen aeris ceu Tonantis horreant, tremant venenum sibilantis Gorgonae, putent ephebum post triumphos Indicos ferire thyrsos posse, cum sit ebrius. tum quod Dianam molle succinctam vident, venantis arcum pertimescent virginis; si forte vultum tristioris Herculis liquore crispo massa finxit fusilis, clavam minari, ni colatur, creditur" (tr.) Thomson (with modifications), 249.

⁷ For the relationship between material image and divine epiphany in earlier Greco-Roman contexts see Platt, *Facing the Gods*, particularly Chapter 1.

⁸ Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 37.

in a 'post classical society'; but it was not a 'non-classical' society.⁹

Even in the seemingly Christian society of the late fourth and early fifth century, the classical tradition was still the "only tradition that was known to work".¹⁰

Prudentius also addresses these concerns about the deceptive power of the art of the classical tradition more fully in another of his poems, *Contra Symmachum II*.¹¹ In this case the joint emperors, Honorius and Arcadius, ostensibly directing a challenge to the pagan Symmachus, are made to attack the images of the gods in the temples.¹² They also disparage the work of painters who give form to mythic creatures concocted by poets, turning them into objects of worship:

The handiwork of painters has taught you to make a divinity out of unreal shapes which the poet's licence has composed ... the painters' charming art has taken from your shrine something to copy with diverse strokes and melted wax and shape into a figure, making bold to depict it fancifully with coloured paints and aided by her partner poetry. In this way Homer and bold Apelles and Numa follow the same path and devise worthless visions, and painting, poetry, and idolatry have a similar aim. The power of deception grew strong in three forms. If it is not so, let it be said, why do poets' tales present you with objects of worship from pictures and waxen figures?¹³

⁹ P. Brown, 'Art and Society in Late Antiquity' in K. Weitzmann (ed.), *The Age of Spirituality* (New York: The Museum, 1979), 17-27, at 23; Robert Markus suggests that the "complex heterogeneity" of this world did not finally transform into the "homogenous simplicity" of a narrow Christian culture until the sixth century. 'Between Marrou and Brown: Transformations of Late Antique Christianity' in P. Rousseau, M. Papoutsakis (eds.), *Transformations of Late Antiquity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 1-13, at 11.

¹⁰ Brown, 'Art and Society', 23.

¹¹ *CS.I* and *II*. These were ostensibly a reply to the prefect nearly Symmachus' appeal for the return of the Altar of Victory to the Senate House in 384, but effectively a refutation of pagan belief, written twenty years after the event.

¹² *CS.II* (CCSL 126: 213, lines 28-38). Putting his words into the Emperors' mouths was a useful ploy to give force to Prudentius' own sentiments.

¹³ *CS. II* (CCSL 126:213, lines 39 -48): "Vos pictorum docuit manus adsimulatis iure poetarum numen componere monstis...lepida ex vestro sumpsit pictura sacello quod variis imitata notis ceraque liquenti duceret in faciem, sociique poematis arte aucta coloratis auderet ludere fucis. Sic unum sectantur iter, sic cassa figuris somnia concipiunt et Homerus et acer Apelles et Numa, cognatumque malum volunt pigmenta, Camenae, idola. Convaluit fallendi trina potestas. Haec si non ita sunt, edatur

With these words Prudentius denigrates, through the Emperors, the classical poets, as represented by Homer, who created myths of the gods in verse, and the artists, as represented by Apelles, who gave shape to the myths. The third object of his scorn is Numa, an early king of Rome and the reputed founder of Roman religious institutions, who represents idolatry. These figures had formed a synecdochal trinity which had deceived the worshipper into believing that empty fantasies were divinities. This passage not only reiterates Prudentius' disquiet regarding the power of the artist to create false idols, but also reflects further concerns as to the alliance between poetry and art to promote such idolatry. (This is in spite of his appreciation of the works of the great classical authors).¹⁴

Prudentius' audience, on hearing the villa-poet's excoriations, may have felt confused: the same alliance between poetry and art condemned in *Contra Symmachum* II is itself manifested in Prudentius' verses extolling the inspirational force of the wall paintings which told the stories of the deaths of the martyrs, Cassian and Hippolytus. Both of these poems include descriptions of the depictions of violent scenes of suffering in which the saints perform as "new epic heroes" of Christianity.¹⁵ Cassian, a teacher, endured a lingering death from multiple stab wounds inflicted on him by his pupils, while Hippolytus' punishment for his faith was to be dragged to a broken and bloody end by wild horses.¹⁶ Prudentius seems to be utilising the union of poetry and art which he condemns in *Contra Symmachum* II to inspire and influence the audience for *Peristephanon* IX and XI. Poetry and art combine to portray the heroic stories of the martyrs and parallel the endeavours of the classical poets vis-a-vis the myths. Prudentius, however, was constructing Christian subject matter which provided a textual and iconographic alternative in opposition to the spurious classical model which had previously inspired and informed them. He was trying to define the difference between these constructs for an audience who had often not yet come to fully understand the distinction between

cur sacra vobis ex tabulis cerisque poetica fabula praestat?"(tr.) Thomson (with modifications), 9-11. (Apelles was portrait painter to Alexander the Great).

¹⁴ Augustine similarly criticized the power of classical myths to arouse emotion. In his case he referred to a literary creation. He was ashamed that he sought praise for making an effective declamation on the poetic fiction of a speech of Juno, in which the goddess had expressed grief and anger. *Confessionum Libri XIII*, I. XVII.27 (CCSL 27: 15); He also condemned "mendaciis poetarum" in *De Civitate Dei* XVII, XVIII (CCSL 47: 200).

¹⁵ Mastrangelo, *The Roman Self*, 57.

¹⁶ *Pe.IX* (CCSL 126: 327-8, lines 31-92); *Pe.XI* (CCSL 126:372-5, lines 77-170).

the Christian and the Classical. After all, in the past maintaining right relations between the Roman state and the divine had frequently necessitated absorbing new gods and their attendant iconographies and many in this audience may not have differentiated Christianity from these other traditions.¹⁷ In making this distinction Prudentius was in tune with other Christian writers who sought to “eradicate the fuzziness of the borders” between Christianity and other religions and to strengthen the idea of a Christian identity.¹⁸

Prudentius’ *Peristephanon* poems thus provide a Christian alternative for his cultured Hispano-Gallic audience and urge that audience to make an either/or choice. This aim is further underlined by subsequent verses in *Contra Symmachum* II. In the latter he criticizes the decorative use of mythic imagery, specifically targeting that concerning the pagan Hippolytus:

The horny-hoofed horses are excluded from the sacred groves of
the temple of Diana Trivia, after the Muse has carried away a
chaste youth [Hippolytus] along the shore in a flying chariot, and a
wall gives you a picture of the scene delineated in many colours.
Cease, foolish pagan...to form incorporeal things in false bodies.¹⁹

As discussed in Chapter Four, the myth of the classical Hippolytus was told in the plays of Seneca and Euripides, and in the verses of Vergil and Ovid.²⁰ The story of the youth, torn apart by raging horses, but restored to life by Diana, must have been lodged in Prudentius’ mind as he wrote *Peristephanon* XI. This is particularly made clear by his verbatim quotation of lines used by Vergil – an intertextual reference, emphasizing his own literary background, which could not have escaped the notice

¹⁷ Beard, North, Price, *Religions of Rome, Vol.1*. Chapter 6 sets out the evidence for various ‘foreign’ cults visible in Rome – for example those of Magna Mater, Isis, Sarapis and Mithras; *Volume 2, A Sourcebook*, 43-9, 288-319.

¹⁸ D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: the Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) regarding the created distinction between Jews and Christians, 1-33; See also I. Sandwell in *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-20 - on John Chrysostom’s attempt to construct a distinct Christian identity at a time when “Christians were losing their position as a persecuted minority” and “had to work harder to define what it meant to be Christian”.

¹⁹ *CS.II* (CCSL 126:213, lines 53-58): “Etiam templo Triviae lucisque sacratīs cornipedes arcentur equi, cum Musa pudicum raptarīt iuvenem volucris per litora curru, idque etiam paries tibi versicoloris adumbret? Desine.... gentilis ineptia ...incorporeas simulatis fingere membris”.

²⁰ In Seneca’s *Hippolytus*, Hippolytus is torn by brambles, thorns and rocks as wild horses drag him through the countryside. His followers gather his remains for his funeral pyre, 404-9, (1068-84, 1093-4, 1105-15). This in turn was based on Euripides’ *Hippolytus*; Vergil, *Aeneid*, 293, 7.761-82, Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15, 398-402.

of the educated elite listening to him.²¹ A transposition has, however, occurred so that in Prudentius' poem the wall painting portrays the Christian Hippolytus suffering the same fate, but ultimately being saved through Christ rather than a pagan deity. Prudentius is using his narrative based on the image of the martyrdom of Saint Hippolytus as a weapon in the promotion of the true faith.

The fact that Prudentius' audience was familiar with the iconography and imagery of the 'pagan' Hippolytus is demonstrated by a fine second/third-century sarcophagus found in Tarragona. This sarcophagus displays in detail the story of the "Classical" Hippolytus in vivid detail.²² Although they exist elsewhere in the Empire, extant depictions of the myth in Hispania are rare.²³ However, one can assume that at least some of the classically-educated viewers of such a grand sarcophagus would have been familiar with the myth – as, of course, Prudentius himself was. It was thus necessary for Prudentius to create an ekphrasis of the martyrdom of the Christian Hippolytus of such power that it would challenge the ancient myth and replace it with a Christian 'myth' of rebirth after death through Christ. He needed to show that representations of martyr stories were more valid as an art form than those of the recognizable legends familiar to his Hispano-Gallic audience.

Pagan icons were also, however, objects of beauty which were appreciated for their aesthetic qualities by the Hispano-Roman elite, as the material evidence in Section II below will show. Prudentius' attitude was similarly complicated by his admiration for these classical images.²⁴ It was the use to which they were put which caused his revulsion. During the course of *Contra Symmachum* I (a prolonged attack on paganism) Prudentius requires the Emperor Theodosius I to condemn "heathen

²¹ "Etiam templo Triviae lucisque sacratis cornipedes arcentur equi", Vergil, *Aeneid*, 293, 7.778-9, cf. n.19 above.

²² García y Bellido, *Esculturas romanas*, 244-53; Illustration 13, Appendix B.

²³ A.Cameron, *Greek Mythography in the Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 222. Hippolytus was one of the most popular mythological themes on sarcophagi, with forty known examples; Baratta, *Kalakorikos*, 115. A possible representation of Hippolytus' death appears on a terra sigillata italica vase also found in Tarragona.

²⁴ Church fathers had similar difficulties as Christians in coming to terms with their admiration for classical literature. Jerome, *Epistulae I*, Ep.22.30 (CSEL 54:189-191). Here Jerome fasts so that he might afterwards enjoy Cicero; Basil of Caesarea believed, nevertheless, that it was possible to take the good from reading profane literature provided one was aware of the dangers. Basil of Caesarea, *Address to young men on Reading Profane Literature*, 1.10.5, in M.Maas, *Readings in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2000), 49.

divinities” and all their rites.²⁵ The Emperor is repelled by sacrifices and rituals performed before “marbles spattered and dripping with blood”.²⁶ However, according to Prudentius, the Emperor then pleads with his nobles that they be washed, so that the “statues, the works of great artists, be allowed to rest clean; these are our country’s most beautiful ornaments, and let no debased usage pollute the monuments of art and turn it into a crime”.²⁷ In Prudentius’ poem on the third-century martyr Lawrence, the saint is charged by the poet to foretell a time when the temples will be closed, and the representations of the deities, once cleansed and detached from their original function, will be innocent, and can then be appreciated as works of artistic merit.²⁸ By putting these words into the mouths of Theodosius and Lawrence, Prudentius, a committed Christian, could avoid direct acknowledgement of the continuing attachment which he and his audience (themselves perhaps nominally Christian) had to the visual traditions of the past.

The fact that Prudentius had criticised art and artists through the mouths of Honorius and Arcadius in *Contra Symmachum* II may be significant with respect to Hispania. In 399AD these emperors wrote a constitution that shares the words which Prudentius gave to their father to speak. This initially forbade the performance of sacrifices, but continued: “...it is Our will that the ornaments of public works [e.g. temples] shall be preserved. If any person should attempt to destroy such works, he shall not have the right to flatter himself as relying on any authority”.²⁹ It is plausible that Prudentius, as well as members of the Hispano-Gallic elite, knew of this constitution, since at least one copy was directed to Macrobius, Vicar of Spain and Proclianus, Vicar of the Five Provinces (Southern Gaul) and was close in date to Prudentius’ writing c.402AD.³⁰ Did the poet consider the Emperors’ recognition of the temples as works of art as unacceptably tolerant? Or did he agree with the

²⁵ *CS.I* (CCSL 126: 201, line 449): “Sint haec barbaricis gentilia numina pagis”.

²⁶ *CS.I* (CCSL 126: 203, line 501): “Marmora tabenti respergine tincta”.

²⁷ *CS.I* (CCSL 126: 203, lines 502-5): “O procures, liceat statuas consistere puras, artificum magnorum opera: haec pulcherrima nostrae ornamenta fiant patriae, nec decolor usus in vitium versae monumenta coinquinet artis”. This seems to indicate that Prudentius was aware of a ruling by Theodosius that images in temples should be measured by their artistic value rather than their divinity, *C.Th.* 16.10.8 (given at Constantinople, Nov 30, 382AD).

²⁸ *Pe.II* (CCSL 126: 273-4, lines 473-84).

²⁹ *C.Th.* 16.10.15 (given at Ravenna, 29 Jan. 399AD): “Macrobio vicario Hispaniarum et Procliano vicario quinque provinciam. Sicut sacrificia prohibemus, ita volumus publicorum operum ornamenta servari. Ac ne sibi aliqua auctoritae blandiantur, qui ea conantur evertere” (tr.) C. Pharr, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

³⁰ This is dateable to the Battle of Pollentia mentioned in *CS. II* (CCSL 126:236, line 720).

Imperial ruling which seems to match his own opinion on the preservation of purified pagan monuments? If the former, he could, by imposing condemnation of heathen artworks on Honorius and Arcadius in his own writing, purport to challenge their legal judgement tolerating the preservation of these works. If the latter, he could be expressing his own ambivalence and acknowledgement of their artistic worth by expressing his opinions through the voice of Theodosius. Both of these propositions have validity, and both must have reflected the conflicted views of many of his listeners.

Honorius' and Arcadius' constitution further suggests that in Hispania and Southern Gaul there may have been elements of the populace who were responsible for the destruction of temple art.³¹ Perhaps they were members of committed Christian communities like Prudentius' in Calagurris, aware that in leaving the statues of the gods undisturbed, siren-like, they might entice their viewers back to worship.³² But there were still many, both Christian and non-Christian, who, in spite of their doubts, like Prudentius, had an affection and admiration for the aesthetic value of the art of their traditional classical culture which would prevent them from wholeheartedly supporting this iconoclastic course of action.

In the following section I explore this traditional visual culture – the kind of 'secular art' which still had 'social relevance' for the Hispano-Roman elite – contextualising it in relation to the views on the subject expressed by Prudentius in his poems. Using hitherto neglected material evidence I then examine the incipient Christian iconography developing in Hispania. As we shall see, the material evidence suggests that, in spite of doubts over its use, Prudentius' audience could be receptive to the concept of art as a proper adjunct to Christian devotion. In doing so I will also analyse the extent to which the subject-matter of Hispano-Gallic art correlates with the content of Prudentius' verses. In concluding I will compare the visual and mental processes by which Prudentius might have brought Christian

³¹ For example, E. Sauer, in *The Archaeology of Religious Hatred in the Roman and Early Medieval World* (Stroud: Tempus, 2003), suggests that pagan statues at a necropolis (Carmona) near Seville were subject to Christian iconoclastic attack, 39-43.

³² *C.Th.*, 16.10.18. Later in 399 than the ruling of 16.10.15 the emperors were addressing this problem, instructing the Proconsul in Africa that idols be removed, since they were still being worshipped – “si quis vero in sacrificio fuerit deprehensus, in eum legibus vindicetur, depositis sub officio idolis disceptatione habita, quibus etiam nunc patuerit cultum vanae superstitionis inpendi” (given at Padua, Aug.20, 399).

imagery to his poetry with the way in which an audience, as yet unacquainted with this mode of representation, might channel traditional art forms in order to visualise his words. I will thereby propose an approach by which the symbols of a classical *paideia* could have been reconciled with those of Christianity.

II. The Visual Culture of the Hispano-Roman Elite.

While it is probable that Prudentius saw, and doubtless admired, the Italian martyr paintings which he described in *Peristephanon* IX and XI, we should remember that the poems were written in Hispania for an audience there.³³ His experience of visual culture and that of this Hispano-Roman audience would, in the main, have been centred in his homeland.³⁴ Although Prudentius was writing largely before the efflorescence of Christian art in the fifth and sixth centuries, the fourth century in Hispania was a time of wealth and prosperity, when the elite vied to outdo one another in the richness of decor of their villas and town-houses. Therefore while there is a substantial corpus of religious iconography recorded on funereal sarcophagi, it is in the homes of this elite that the splendour of the Spanish artistic tradition of the late Roman period can best be seen. Prudentius may not have approved of these magnificent buildings, condemning these “dwellings built with great splendour” as vanities, but in his capacity as villa-poet he would have recognised the significance of these surroundings to his readers, and that his descriptions of paintings could appeal to an audience appreciative of the importance of art.³⁵ We thus turn now to an exploration of the artistic record of late Roman Hispania which would have provided the visual backdrop to the construction of Prudentius’ verses for his audience. This is exhibited in the material remains left by the elite, which give evidence not only of their aesthetic preferences, but also of their social and religious attitudes.

³³ In *Pe. XI* (CCSL 126: 376, 179): “Laetor reditu”. Prudentius refers to his glad return to Hispania from Rome.

³⁴ A point which is seldom acknowledged. For example, Grig, *Making Martyrs*, in her otherwise excellent chapter, ‘Picturing martyrs’, which discusses the imagery of *Peristephanons* IX and XI, does not refer to Spanish art, Ch.6; see also Pillinger, who, in *Die Tituli Historiarum*, connects the images Prudentius describes in the *Tituli Historiarum* to art in Italy rather than to relevant images in Hispania, see below.

³⁵ *Pe. XIV* (CCSL 126: 389, lines 104, 99): “Splendore multo structa habitacula” which are “vanities that an inconstant generation seizes on” - “quod vana saeculi mobilitas rapit”.

The houses of the Spanish elite of the fourth and early fifth century present us with a treasury of art from which it is possible to analyse the ideology and cultural aspirations of their owners. This period witnessed the apogee of the Roman villa in Hispania. Many rural establishments from the High Empire, concentrated along the valleys of the rivers which crossed the peninsula, were reconstructed and extended in the fourth century. Similarly, there is evidence that, in spite of many cities changing in shape and focus with a movement away from public ornamentation, urban areas such as Mérida, Zaragoza and Barcelona also witnessed the embellishment of well-appointed townhouses.³⁶ The decor that the wealthy magnate and his wife chose for their homes displayed the view of themselves which they wished to present to the outside world. J-G. Gorges, in his fundamental volume on Hispano-Roman villas, considered that it was the decoration and not the method of construction of these villas, which provided a reflection of the power of the *dominus*.³⁷ He theorised that the mosaics which adorned the floors of the principal rooms now provide the main visual evidence for the mindset of these owners. Inevitably there remains a severely limited record of the paintings which once decorated the walls and the sculptural ornamentation has often been destroyed. However, the whole house would once have been designed to impress. To quote Jaś Elsner: “no marker of identity was more profound, in the world inhabited by the Roman elite, than the ‘private’ house”.³⁸ In fourth-century Hispania grand villas such as La Malena, Villa Fortunatus, Los Quintanares, La Olmeda, La Cocosa and Milreu were centred round a peristyle, onto whose colonnaded space the rooms of the house opened. These were often rooms for reception and entertaining designed to display in their decor the social standing of the owner to their visitors.³⁹ The house and its art was where the identity and social status of the *dominus* could be demonstrated, but it could also reflect the social aspirations of those who wished to join the elite.⁴⁰

³⁶ On villas see Chavarría Arnau, ‘Villas in Hispania’, 519, and more fully in *El Final de Las Villae*, 32-3, 53-5; and on late urban development see Kulikowski, ‘Cities and Government’, 32-76; Arce, Chavarría, Ripoll, ‘Urban Domus’, on Emerita, Barcelona and Complutum.

³⁷ Gorges, *Les villas Hispano-romaines*. “C’est la décoration, et non le mode de construction, qui reflète la puissance du maître. Les mosaïques, bien souvent, en sont le plus visible des témoignages”, 141.

³⁸ Elsner, *Imperial Rome*, 44.

³⁹ Chavarría Arnau, ‘Villas in Hispania’, 527-539, Figs. 5B, 6A, 10A and 12B.

⁴⁰ Stewart, *The Social History*, 40.

The most common type of image which demonstrated the ideal of the *dominus* was that of the hunt. It appears in seventeen known mosaics in Hispania between the third and fifth centuries.⁴¹ Sometimes the mosaic contains only a single figure, as at the villa at El Ramalete, close to Prudentius' home town of Calagurris. Here the proprietor, Dulcitus, is depicted on his horse, set in a primitive landscape, raising his arm in a triumphant gesture as he delivers the fatal blow to a deer.⁴² At the villa of Centcelles, near Tarragona, there is a more elaborate scene which runs as a frieze around the dome of a reception room. In this, the finest hunting scene in Hispania, the owner is shown leading his entourage out from his villa, riding through his estate while his huntsmen chase and trap the quarry with dogs and nets or return victorious laden with the kill.⁴³ Mosaics like these presented the hunt as a noble pursuit. In them the owner could be shown as a heroic figure. They could show the *virtus* which gave him victory over his prey, establishing his power and confirming his role as guarantor of the happiness of his dependants.⁴⁴ Similarly scenes of the circus also presented a motif which confirmed the owner's position in society and reflected his lifestyle and interests, and were particularly popular in fourth-century Hispania. Much of a large realistic mosaic from a Barcelona house remains to show a vivid depiction of a *quadriga* race inscribed with the names of horses and stables, perhaps referring to those belonging to the *domus*-owner himself.⁴⁵ The two themes have in common the central part played by horses and the prestige which was attached to the ownership of fine equine specimens.⁴⁶ The art represented by these mosaics was instrumental in presenting an image of 'self' of the *dominus*. Like the image of a deity, this did not necessarily portray reality. It was an illusion designed to give an impression of his status and identity to the viewer.

⁴¹ I. Morand, *Idéologie, culture et spiritualité chez les propriétaires ruraux de l'Hispanie romaine* (Paris: De Boccard, 1994), 21.

⁴² Blázquez, Mezquíz, *Mosaicos romanos de Navarra*, CME.VII, 63-9, pl. 39-40.

⁴³ Illustration 17, Appendix B; Morand, *Idéologie*, at 97, suggests that this particular image is constructed to resemble the emperor and his *comitatus*; K. Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). The association of the hunting scene directly with the owner, setting it in his estate, became popular in fourth-century North Africa, from whence came many influences as to the content and style of Spanish mosaics, 61-2, 219-21.

⁴⁴ Morand, *Idéologie*, 22, "La *virtus* et la victoire fondant le pouvoir du maître, et lui permettent d'assurer son rôle suprême qui est de garantir la *felicitas*".

⁴⁵ Beltrán, *From Barcino*, 38-9; R. Leader-Newby, 'Inscribed mosaics in the late Roman Empire: perspectives from East and West', in R. Leader-Newby, Z. Newby (eds.), *Art and Inscription in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 179-99, on the use of texts to 'personalise' the mosaic, thus "making explicit the patron's involvement in choosing the subject matter", 198.

⁴⁶ See n.80, Chapter 2 on Symmachus and his demands for Spanish horses.

The hunt and the circus represented physical arenas where men could display their fortune and success. The intellectual environment of Spanish aristocrats was also reflected in the choice of decoration for their homes, where images of the pagan deities continued to be used extensively to embellish elite surroundings during the later fourth century, in spite of the ostensible conversion to Christianity of many of the aristocracy. As considered earlier, the visual content of this decoration provides evidence of the cultural ethos of a Hispano-Roman elite still using the classical tradition as a measure of their social status. The ‘social relevance’ of the ‘secular art’ of the elite, as explained by Brown, can be demonstrated in Hispania through the example of a mosaic from La Olmeda. This was a monumental villa reconstructed not earlier than the second quarter of the fourth century (which I have discussed more fully in Chapter Two), although the mosaics probably date from later in the century. In the principal reception room two panels abut one another. The first shows a scene with two horsemen, one of whom is probably the proprietor, and two hunters on foot in a ferocious fight with wild boar and antelope, but also with animals more likely to be found in the amphitheatre – lions, leopards and tigers.⁴⁷ The second is a scene depicting Achilles on Skyros – a mythological story set down by Statius in the first century AD.⁴⁸ Around this image is a border containing medallions bearing male and female portraits, probably of the proprietor and his family, and at the corners representations of the four seasons emerge from acanthus leaves, complemented by amphoras and vegetal motifs symbolic of the fecundity of the estate. Here, therefore, in one place is celebrated the heroic and courageous patron, the fertility of his lands, and his literary and cultural tastes and those of his family.

Prudentius makes no specific commentary on the non-Christian imagery depicted in the mosaics of Roman Spain, but his low opinion of the mythology which provided the stories behind these images is made clear in his writing.⁴⁹ He pours scorn on the fables of the divine and semi-divine which contain “the dishonour of young women, pledges of love, births, and furtive passion for young men, and seducers caught corrupting the marriage-bed”.⁵⁰ His distaste for these legends appears once again in the words of St. Romanus: “You say the poets freely invent

⁴⁷ Illustration 4, Appendix B.

⁴⁸ Illustration 2, Appendix B; Palol, *La Olmeda*, regarding the *paideia* of the owner, 29.

⁴⁹ *CS. I* and *II*; *Pe.X* in particular.

⁵⁰ *CS. I* (CCSL 126: 191, lines 159-61): “Puellarum ludibria pignera partus et furtivus amor iuvenum et deprensa iugalis corruptela tori”.

these [stories of the gods]...”, but “...what they describe they worship. Why do you read with pleasure so often about sin?”⁵¹ Again the dichotomy emerges between Prudentius’ educational and cultural background and that of his peers, and the personal religious commitment of the poet and his fellow Hispanic Christians. While criticizing the taste for the pagan myths of his readers, there is a natural assumption that his audience will understand his often oblique references to these tales of the deities and their associates.

Prudentius frequently refers disparagingly to particular myths - illustrations of which can be found repeated across the Iberian peninsula in the mosaics decorating the villas of the educated elite. It seems significant that the longest of these critiques is directed against an episode in the story of Bacchus, since the god appears to have held a special place in the decorative schemes of their homes - for this reason I am focusing on this motif in particular. Prudentius’ critique proceeds as follows:

A young man of Thebes [Bacchus] becomes a god because he has conquered India, rejoicing the victor comes wantoning in triumph, and brings home the gold of the vanquished nation, and in the pride of his spoils abandons himself to indulgence in company with his half-human following, and in his lust for wine he soaks himself with many a draught, with the Falernian wine that foams from his jewelled cup sprinkling the dripping backs of the wild beasts that draw his chariot. In recognition of these merits a goat is now sacrificed to Bacchus on every altar, and those that wish to propitiate Bromius [Bacchus] tear green snakes with their mouths, as even then the mad-drunk satyrs did before their king’s eyes and the maenads did too in their frenzied excitement, when the wine set them afire and whirled them into every sort of sin. With this company dancing around him the drunken adulterer finds abandoned on the sands of a lonely shore a mistress of admirable form [Ariadne], whom a faithless young lover [Theseus] had deserted there when he tired of his unclean passion. Heated with drink, he takes up his love and orders her to stand with him amid

⁵¹ *Pe. X* (CCSL 126: 337, lines 216 and 218-19): “Dicis licenter haec poetas fingere...quodque describunt colunt. Tu cur piaculum tam libenter lectitas?”

his voluptuous, drunken procession and with honour wear a royal crown on her head.⁵²

The tableau representing this procession, usually called the ‘Triumph of Bacchus’, seems to have been the most popular image in Hispania with around a dozen known mosaics of the scene.⁵³ As a subject the ‘Triumph’ is only occasionally found outside of Spain and North Africa.⁵⁴ It is therefore probable that Prudentius was familiar with the mosaic of the ‘Triumph’, or at least he was acquainted with the elite who had decorated their homes with this image.

In the quotation above, Prudentius writes as if he is describing an actual scene of the ‘Triumph’ in front of him – in fact, as if writing an ekphrasis of a mosaic. His description of Bacchus’ cortege coincides in many respects with extant mosaics of the scene in Hispania, although there is no exact match with a particular one. In some mosaics, as at Ecija, Seville, the procession is modest. Bacchus, clothed in a long robe, rides in his chariot drawn by two tigers, the two wild beasts referred to by Prudentius. He carries his wand, his thyrsus, which identifies him, but no wine-cup. The crowned Ariadne, whom he has found on Naxos, is beside him, and they are accompanied only by a satyr brandishing a *tympanon*.⁵⁵ At Zaragoza this cortege has expanded to include two dancing bacchantes, the god Pan leading the tigers and a youthful satyr.⁵⁶ On his chariot is winged Victory, representing his defeat of the Indians, as mentioned by Prudentius, but instead of Ariadne there is a figure of a

⁵² CS. I (CCSL 126:190, lines 122-141): “Thebanus iuvenis superatis fit deus Indis, successu dum victor ovans lascivit et aurum captivae gentis revehit spoliisque superbus diffluit in luxum cum semiviro comitatu atque avidus vini multo se proluit haustu gemmantis paterae spumis mustoque Falerno perfundens biugum rorantia terga ferarum. His nunc pro meritis Baccho caper omnibus aris caeditur, et virides discindunt ore chelydros qui Bromium placare volunt, quod et ebria iam tunc ante oculos regis satyrorum insania fecit, et fecisse reor stimulis furialibus ipsas maenadas inflammante mero in scelus omne rotatas. Hoc circumsaltante choro temulentus adulter invenit expositum secreti in litoris acta corporis egregii scortum, quod perfidus illic liquerat incesto iuvenis satiat amor. Hanc iubet adsumptam fervens post vina neaeram secum in deliciis fluitantis stare triumfi regalemque decus capitis gestare coronam” (tr.) Thomson (with modifications), 359-361. (Ariadne was abandoned on Naxos by Theseus).

⁵³ J.Lancha, *Mosaïque et culture dans l’occident romain (Ier – IVe.s)* (Rome: “L’Erma” di Bretschneider, 1997), 211; See Appendix A, 219 for locations of ‘Bacchus’ mosaics.

⁵⁴ K.Dunbabin. ‘The Triumph of Dionysus on Mosaics in North Africa’, *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 39 (1979), 52-65, at 58-60; Spanish workshops seem to have been influenced by North African mosaicists in the fourth century, and there was probably a large body of similar motifs in existence on the peninsula at the time. The description Prudentius gives of the procession matches a number of mosaics of a type known in North Africa.

⁵⁵ J.Blázquez, *Mosaicos romanos de Sevilla, Granada, Cadiz y Murcia*, CME IV (Madrid: Instituto Español de Arqueología “Rodrigo Caro” del CSIC, 1982), 13-19.pl.1.

⁵⁶ Illustration 18, Appendix B.

satyr beside him.⁵⁷ These two images are earlier, from the Antonine or Severan period, and present an imposing figure of the god. However, by the fourth century, at Torre de Palma, Portugal, a more rumbustious crowd have appeared who match Prudentius' account more closely. Now the drunken Bacchus is naked, and holds an empty wine-jug and his wand, with a bacchante beside him and a satyr driving his chariot, while Pan leads the tigers. Bacchantes, musicians and satyrs dance in frenzy around him. This mosaic is the largest part of an ensemble of eleven mosaic panels, which mainly seem to be associated with the god. Three panels contain images of his followers and a fourth of his old tutor Silenus. Ariadne does not accompany him, but her former lover, Theseus, is present, shown killing the Minotaur in another panel. Prudentius' account of goat sacrifice and mouthfuls of green snakes may refer to real or rumoured Bacchic cultic practices, but these scenes do not appear in the mosaics. Nonetheless, the fact that the Bacchus 'Triumph' was so prolific as an artistic motif in Hispania implies that, with his attack on this theme, Prudentius was likely to have been specifically targeting a Spanish audience who still appreciated Bacchanalian frolics and the triumphant power of the god of wine.

Another panel at Torre de Palma shows a frieze of the Muses and probably confirms the villa-owner's association of Bacchus with classical literary pretensions.⁵⁸ At Puente Genil, in Córdoba province, a fourth-century panel depicts a similar scene of triumphal celebration. The naked Bacchus rides his chariot, bacchantes and satyrs around him, Pan dancing beside the tigers, but Bacchus is also joined by Silenus, riding a donkey. This mosaic is unusual in being accompanied by a second panel, showing Bacchus' actual victory over the Indians with his armed followers.⁵⁹ The 'Triumph' was still a popular theme at the beginning of the fifth century, when the mosaic at Baños de Valdearados, in Burgos, was created. Here, there is a return to a simpler theme. Bacchus, clutching his wine-jug, rides with Ariadne in a cart, this time pulled by two panthers, accompanied by Pan. However, this mosaic panel is attached to another which brings him together with his Bacchanalian troop. In this more static scene, the drunken god is joined and

⁵⁷ Blázquez et al., *Museo Arqueológico Nacional*, CME IX, 51-7; M. Beltrán Lloris, A. Mostalac Carillo, J. Paz Peralta, *Caesar Augusta: La casa de la hispanorromanos* (Zaragoza: Gobierno de Aragón, 2009), 25-7.

⁵⁸ Lancha, *Mosaïque et culture*, 231-55; J. Blázquez, *Mosaicos romanos de España* (Madrid: Catedra, 1993), 275-306.

⁵⁹ Lancha, *Mosaïque et culture*, 209-12.

supported by his companions, - in this case Ariadne, Silenus, Pan, and the bacchantes and satyrs.⁶⁰ This static theme, a *Thiasos*, also appears slightly earlier, at the end of the fourth century, at Complutum, where the inebriated Bacchus leans drunkenly on a satyr, an empty wine-jug hanging from his hand, accompanied by a bacchante, or possibly Ariadne, and Silenus.⁶¹ This form of Bacchic mosaic is further evidence of the Spanish affection for the god's image.

The attachment to representations of mythological figures such as Bacchus continued even though the skills to create them were probably fading. The later mosaics from the turn of the century at Baños de Valdearados and Complutum, although by their size designed to impress, are less skilful artistically than the earlier mosaics. Proportions are inaccurate, figures are crudely drawn and there is no depth in the perspective of the frame in which the protagonists sit. The frontality of these figures speaks stylistically of Late Antiquity. The plasticity of classical naturalism has gone. A further late Bacchic mosaic, dated around 400AD, from a house in Mérida, has been singled out by Dunbabin as being a remarkable example of the dissolution of the classical style.⁶² The mosaic reveals only a vague knowledge of the original story and of concepts of design, as the unrelated and inexpertly drawn figures of Bacchus, a sleeping Ariadne and Pan, accompanied by a satyr and a leopard, are scattered randomly across the mosaic surface together with ornamental motifs of circles and discs. Another late mosaic at the villa of Estada, not far from Zaragoza, dating to the end of the fourth century or even later, is also of crude design.⁶³ A squat, apparently naked figure, variously identified as a gladiator or athlete, or a god or hero, stands beneath a pointed roof shape a segmented disc in his raised hand. A seemingly finely dressed figure sits to his left, and both are surrounded by scattered forms: a swastika, ears of wheat, pomegranates, more discs and variously decorated circles.⁶⁴ It has been proposed that the segmented disc replicates those held by Theodosius' sons as depicted on the famous silver Missorium plate, a probable Imperial donative found in Hispania, and that the second

⁶⁰ López Monteagudo et al., *Burgos*, CME XII, 13-6, pl.31.

⁶¹ Illustration 19, Appendix B; Blázquez et al., *Museo Arqueológico Nacional*, CME IX, 21-6, pl.33.

⁶² Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, 272, and illustrated at 158, fig.163; Also A. Blanco Freijeiro, *Mosaicos romanos de Mérida*, CME I, (Madrid: Instituto Español de Arqueología "Rodrigo Caro" del CSIC, 1978), 21-2, pl.26-7.

⁶³ Illustration 20, Appendix B; Beltrán Lloris et al., *Caesar Augusta*, 50-2, Fig.48.

⁶⁴ The villa is situated close to the river Cinca, near, (coincidentally?) to the site of Christian funerary mosaics containing the same decorative circles. See below 200, n.158.

figure, perhaps the *dominus*, is therefore receiving some Imperial honour, as represented by the proffered disc.⁶⁵ (I further suggest that this figure is surrounded by symbols of good fortune and fecundity in a dim echo of the skilled imagery as seen at La Olmeda). Whatever the exact reading of this intriguing mosaic, the villa-owner thought it important to show not only his wealth and status but his 'educated' credentials as is exemplified by a (partially destroyed) quotation from the Aeneid which runs along one side.⁶⁶

These later mosaics show that although the craftsmanship and artistry needed to produce them was declining by the early fifth century, there were still patrons like those at Baños de Valdearados, Complutum and Mérida, who wished to portray ancient myths in their homes, or like the Estada *dominus* to show a knowledge of the works of Vergil which Prudentius, with his intertextual tendencies, might have appreciated. These owners may have wished to flatter their visitors with the assumption that they too were erudite enough to appreciate the classical references contained in the mosaics. Nevertheless, the extent to which this erudition was spread comprehensively across the wide spectrum of villa-owners has to be open to doubt.

While many did enjoy the same level of education as Prudentius and possessed the knowledge to demand certain themes for their mosaics, the influence and guidance of the mosaicist himself must often have been felt, especially in the case of the nouveau-riche, or those who aspired to join the elite.⁶⁷ The mosaicist probably had a collection of models or patterns of some kind, although whether this took the form of a model-book is open to question.⁶⁸ He also used his training and experience to provide a scheme which would suit the location of the mosaic and the taste of the client, who must on occasion have made a choice based on the appearance rather than the subject matter of the design.⁶⁹ It is only occasionally that the signature of the

⁶⁵ García y Bellido, *Esculturas romanas*, Missorium de Theodosius I, 470-74, Figs. 346-52; Beltrán Lloris et al., *Caesar Augusta*, 52.

⁶⁶ "*Dividimos muros et ... oper[i]*" from the Aeneid II, lines 234 and 235.

⁶⁷ Arce, 'Musivaria y simbolismo', 85-97. Arce uses the example of Trimalchio from Petronius' Satyricon, (59, 3-6) to show the confused knowledge of mythic tales which could exist among the ill-educated, 87-93.

⁶⁸ R.Ling, *Roman Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Since the same motifs appear across the empire, Ling considers evidence for pattern-books to be overwhelming, 217-220; Cameron, in *Greek Mythography*, similarly agrees that the standardized form of many mythological scenes point to illustrated manuals of some sort, 220. He also comments on mythographic handbooks which had been used as a classical literary resource.

⁶⁹ Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* on the transmission of motifs, 300-3.

mosaicist is on his work, suggesting that the owner took credit for the works of art in his home. However, in spite of its inept design, the Bacchic mosaic from a house in Mérida, which was described above, has received the approval of its maker, Anniponius, who, oblivious to its shortcomings, has proudly signed this image ‘*ex officina Anniponi*’.⁷⁰ Even in the early fifth century, therefore, we can see from material evidence across the Iberian peninsula, both patron and artist still wished to be associated with the traditions and art of the “Classical” past.

Another signed mosaic is at the mid-fourth-century monumental villa of Carranque, in the Meseta. The villa was richly decorated with mosaics, including four major mythological scenes, and was according to the excavator, the home of the rabidly Christian Praetorian Prefect, Maternus Cynegius. If this was the case, as yet unproven, it would confirm that Christian belief was happily co-existing alongside images of the pagan myths in late Roman visual art in Hispania – all the more reason, however, for Prudentius to try to make his audience aware of the need to dislocate Christianity from traditional religions.⁷¹ The signed mosaic contained scenes of the amorous pursuits of the gods, and decorated one of the bedrooms. This mosaic announced itself as being ‘*ex oficina Mas...ni pingit Hirinus utere felix Materne hunc cubiculum*’. In this case both the workshop owner, Mas...ni, and the artist, Hirinus, take credit for providing images showing the pleasures of the bed chamber for Maternus. The images depicted were precisely those from myths which met with Prudentius’ violent disapproval in his writing.⁷²

Here, in the villa *cubiculum*, four sexually-charged images enclose a portrait, perhaps of the *domina*. They show the myth of the doomed lovers Pyramus and Thisbe (best-known from ‘The Metamorphoses’ of Ovid); the rape of Amymone by Neptune; the voyeuristic passion of Acteon for the naked Diana; and the beautiful

⁷⁰ Blanco Freijeiro, *Mérida*, CME I, 21-2, pl.26-7.

⁷¹ Elsewhere this coalition can be seen in the oft-referenced casket of Projecta found in Rome. Her name is inscribed on the casket, commended to Christ, but it is also decorated with a scene of the toilet of Venus. Elsner, *Art and the Roman*, 251-5, 274-9; In Spain, the coalition is implied in the Missorium, a silver plate found in Badajoz mentioned above, which portrays the Christian Emperor Theodosius enthroned above a figure of Tellus, the Graeco-Roman personification of Earth, N.Hannestad, ‘How did rising Christianity cope with Pagan Sculpture?’ in Chrysos and Wood, *East and West*, 172-203 at 195.

⁷² *Pe.X* (CCSL 126: 337, lines 218-9).

youth, Hylas, beloved of Hercules, captured and ravished by nymphs.⁷³ Prudentius, in fact, took specific exception to the story of Hylas, railing against the *famosus* passion of Hercules for this *mollis pueri* – this effeminate boy – whom the grieving Hercules searched for, like a husband, when he lost the youth to the nymphs.⁷⁴ No less vehemently Prudentius condemned the passions of Jupiter for Leda, Europa, Danae and Ganymede, illustrated instances of which are still evident in the late fourth century.⁷⁵ There is the famous mosaic of Jupiter pulling aside the robe of the protesting Leda, overtly described as ‘*adulterium Iovis Leda*’ which decorated a house in Complutum.⁷⁶ At Fernan Nuñez, near Córdoba, Europa is carried away by the god as a bull, urged on by Eros (while the same myth appears as a decorated capital at the Villa Fortunatus).⁷⁷ The image of Ganymede taken by Jupiter in the guise of an eagle appears in two mosaics in Italica; in one he is shown, accompanied by the eagle, in a medallion which forms a group with others depicting the loves of Jupiter, including Leda, Europa and Danae; in another mosaic Ganymede alone is depicted being lifted in the embrace of the bird.⁷⁸ Prudentius must have had subjects like this in mind when he criticized the dishonouring of young women (*puellarum ludibria*) and the furtive passion for young men (*furtivus amor iuvenum*).⁷⁹ Prudentius’ scathing references to great and lesser deities who can be seen to inhabit the mosaics of late antique Spain are too numerous to mention individually.⁸⁰ These few examples can only hint at the connection between Prudentius’ poetry and the concerns he harboured over the accepted aesthetic of the (what he defined as) ‘pagan’ imagery which continued to surround him and his audience, and the

⁷³ Fernández Galiano, *Carranque*, at 80 on the site as the presumed resting place of Maternus; 85-6 on the mosaic itself.

⁷⁴ *CS.I* (CCSL 126:189, lines 116-9): “Herculeus mollis pueri famosus amore ardor et in transtris iactata efferbuit Argo: nec maris erubuit Nemea sub pelle fovere concubitus et Hylan pereuntem quaerere caelebs”.

⁷⁵ *CS.I* (CCSL 126:187-8, lines 61-83) ; Augustine complained similarly in *Confessionum* I, XVI, 26 (CCSL 27:14-5, lines 19-29), about a passage in Terence where a young man, after gazing upon a painted wall which showed Jupiter’s adultery with Danae, was encouraged to passion himself by the authority of the god’s example.

⁷⁶ Illustration 7, Appendix B; D. Fernández-Galiano, *Complutum II, Mosaicos* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, Dirección General de Bellas Artes y Archivos, 1984), 203-213.

⁷⁷ Blázquez, *Córdoba, Jaén, Málaga*, CME III, 50-54, Pl. 39c; Escribano and Fatás, *La antigüedad Tardía*, 136, Fig.120.

⁷⁸ A. Blanco Freijeiro, *Mosaicos romanos de Itálica, (I)*, CME II (Madrid: Instituto Español de Arqueología “Rodrigo Caro” del CSIC, 1978), 25, plate 1 and 5b; 28-9, Plate 2c and 14.

⁷⁹ *CS.I* (CCSL 126: 191, lines 159, 160).

⁸⁰ In particular *CS.I* and *II*, and *Pe. X* contain these attacks. See Appendix A for mosaics of pagan deities who are featured in Prudentius’ texts.

subliminal corrosive influence that it might have on the viewer.⁸¹ Even though the viewers themselves may not have been actively conscious of the ‘paganism’ of the traditional art that surrounded them.

Too few figurative paintings remain to enable one to discuss with any confidence images which decorated the walls of fourth and fifth-century public and private dwellings in Hispania. Mainly plaster fragments of architectural, geometric or vegetal nature remain.⁸² Typical hunt and circus scenes survive from houses in Mérida and Complutum, in Barcelona a *dominus* rides with hand upraised, and there are representations of horses at the villas of El Val and Aguilafuente which highlight and repeat similar proprietorial preoccupations as those portrayed in mosaic.⁸³ In a building in Mérida, which was the capital of Hispania at the time, there is also an intriguing frieze. This depicts four large figures in elaborate, stylistically early-fourth-century dress, flanked by columns. The figures, of which only the bottom halves remain, seem to represent the owners or their servants of a great house bearing offerings or objects of a social or religious nature. Although the theory is discounted by Abad Casal, it has been proposed that the building had a Christian function, and that the figures, whose arms are raised, in fact, depict orants, and thus would be a very early record of Christian painting in Hispania.⁸⁴

There is, in contrast to paintings, ample evidence that an outstanding corpus of marble and bronze secular and religious sculpture, of the kind so admired by Prudentius, existed in private dwellings and public buildings, such as temples, baths

⁸¹ These concerns can be compared to those which were related by John Chrysostom, who condemned the damage done by polluting images of performers seen in the theatres, which were stored up in the spectator’s soul - as discussed by R. Webb in *Demons and Dancers: Performance in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2008), 175-81.

⁸² For example, C. García Merino, M. Sánchez Simón, M. Burón Álvarez, ‘Pinturas murales de la Villa de Almenara de Adaja (Valladolid)’, in C. Guiral Pelegrín (ed.), *Circulación de temas y sistemas decorativos en la pintura mural antigua* (Zaragoza: Gobierno de Aragón, 2007), 247-54. This paper shows that there were colourfully painted walls in a number of rooms in this substantial villa. Some were simulations of marble and *opera sectilia*, although painted figurative elements are only suggested.

⁸³ L. Abad Casal, *La pintura romana en España, Vols. I & II* (Alicante: Universidad de Alicante, 1982), 344-51. This remains the principal catalogue of Roman painting in Hispania; Beltrán, *From Barcino*, 195; Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 229, 235.

⁸⁴ Abad Casal, *La pintura*, 43-5. The religious implication is tempting on the grounds of the stylistic similarity between the stance of the figures and that of the saints decorating the sixth-century S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, and also the painted frieze of orants similarly ranged between pillars decorating the Christian Romano-British villa at Lullingstone, Bowes, *Private Worship*, 131-3. Although it is also worth noting the existence of a frieze of six cupbearers at a house in Complutum, Fernández-Galiano, *Complutum*, 135-147.

and theatres, in Hispania at the height of the Empire.⁸⁵ The problem regarding sculptural decoration lies not in the paucity of the remains, but in the difficulty in determining the exact location, context and chronology of these finds.⁸⁶ Many discoveries were made at a time when the find was considered more significant as a work of art than as a contribution to archaeological knowledge. Also, due to the redevelopment of so many villas, statues found in these locations often cannot be attributed to a particular phase, and therefore cannot be assumed to have still been in place during the time of Prudentius. There were, for example, exceptional statues of Aesculapius, Eros and Hygaeus found at Els Munts villa on the north-east coast near Tarraco, which dated from the late first to the late second century, but it is not certain that these decorated a phase of the villa dating from the second to the middle of the third century, or later baths constructed during the fourth century.⁸⁷ Similarly at Els Ametllers at Tossa de Mar, further north-east on the same coast, which was occupied with various modifications until the fifth century or later, a magnificent statue of Hermes, as well as fragments of marble sculpture, were found. These were discovered in a nymphaeum dating from an earlier phase of the villa, and thus it is unclear at what point they ceased to be part of the villa decor. The statue of Hermes is, however, significant as an example of the high quality of sculpture to be found in the villas of Hispania. It is made from fine marble imported from Greece and in type is derived from models based on the work of the Greek sculptor Praxiteles. The other marble finds are too small for the statues to be identified, but are noteworthy in that they were imported from Paxos and Luni-Carrara.⁸⁸

Prudentius had acknowledged that the statues of divine and mythological figures could be great works of art if they were purged of their 'original' use.⁸⁹ Confirmation that Prudentius was not alone in this continuing, albeit guarded, admiration for the statues of classical divinities and mythological figures is demonstrated at the villa of El Ruedo in Córdoba province. This villa was first constructed in the first or second-century, but like many others was subject to major rebuilding at the end of the third

⁸⁵ García y Bellido, *Esculturas romanas*. Although written sixty years ago, this book remains the most comprehensive record of these finds for Hispania as a whole.

⁸⁶ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 111.

⁸⁷ Chavarría Arnau, *El Final*, 184.

⁸⁸ Nolla et al., *Els Ametllers*, 48-9; E.Koppel, I.Rodà, 'La escultura de las villae de la zona del noreste hispánico: los ejemplos de Tarragona y Tossa de Mar', in Fernández Ochoa et al., *Las villae*, 99-131, (Els Ametllers, 118-127).

⁸⁹ *CS.I* (CCSL 126:203, lines 502-5).

and beginning of the fourth century. It consisted of a peristyled residential nucleus together with an agricultural sector which continued to function as a unit well into the fifth century. The later villa contained elaborate geometric and vegetal mosaics and painted walls, but it is significant for the discovery of a sculptural iconographic programme which seems to have been positioned largely in relation to the aquatic features of the villa. Although the sculptures were found in the debris of the fourth and fifth-century levels, these are earlier works dating mainly to the first and second centuries, which the excavator proposes were deliberately acquired by an educated *dominus* who wished to create a particular ambiance around him. The sculptural remains included a tableau representing Perseus and Andromeda, a figure of Attis, a bronze of Hypnos, a group of Pan and a satyr, various herms, a relief of a pastoral scene and part of a statue of Bacchus. As suggested by the excavator, the villa-owner may have been trying to evoke with this ensemble a Bacchic world in communion with nature. In any case, it is apparent that he was a devotee of classical texts and wished to enjoy the *otium* of villa life in an atmosphere redolent of *paideia*.⁹⁰

The villa at El Ruedo appears to have been a relatively modest affair which indicates that that this kind of cultural ambition was not confined to the super-rich.⁹¹ The owner of a later villa at Valdetorres de Jarama, near Complutum, was a collector with similar aesthetic tastes. However, his villa was planned in an octagonal form, unique in Hispania, showing, most probably, a *dominus* with a larger housing budget available to him. It also contained a fine sculptural collection: this collection included, amongst other items, works in unusual dark grey marble apparently relating to Apollo and his fatal assault on the children of Niobe, dating to the beginning of the third century, which seem to have been imported from Asia Minor, probably Aphrodisias. The collection also included a statue of Aesculapius in white marble and the figure of a boy sculpted in rare black marble.⁹² Fragments of ivories, decorated with mythological themes, such as a nymph and a monstrous animal, were also found at the site. These were imported from Egypt and dated to the late fourth or

⁹⁰ Vaquerizo Gil, Carrillo Diaz-Pines, 'The Roman villa of El Ruedo', 144.

⁹¹ Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 140, refers to "fashion on the cheap" economies at the villa, such as stucco painted to resemble marble and bodged renovation work.

⁹² C. Puerta, M. Ángel Elvira and T. Artigas, 'La colección de esculturas hallada en Valdetorres de Jarama', *AEspA*, 67 (1994), 179-200. The remains of the grey statues consist of two archers, a Niobid, a giant, a satyr and other fragments which can be associated with this myth.

early fifth century.⁹³ Kulikowski has suggested that the sculptures could have been amassed by a Spaniard in the east at the Theodosian court who was able to put together a collection of art looted from the temples there in the wake of Maternus Cynegius.⁹⁴ This proposition does not seem to consider the possibility that the sculpture is evidence of long-distance trade in artworks between Hispania and the east in the second and third centuries. Therefore, these sculptures could have been removed in the late fourth century, rather than destroyed, from Spanish temples, as opposed to those in the Eastern Empire, after they no longer could be used for their original purpose. The evidence of the Egyptian ivories shows the more intriguing situation that in the late fourth century and early fifth there was still an active long-distance trade between Spain and the east in contemporary artworks with pagan themes.⁹⁵ This probability may suggest that Prudentius' concerns over the power of art to promote 'wrong belief' were valid. Although it is impossible to establish definitively, this collector might have been making acquisitions which went beyond mere aesthetic appreciation, and thus forming dangerous relationships with works of art as objects of devotion.

Secure evidence, however, for mythical sculptural features being located at late Roman villas comes from La Malena and Villa Fortunatus both of which are located in the Ebro valley and were monumentalised in the fourth century and continued to function into the fifth. At the former an exquisite marble statue of Demeter/Ceres was found, while at the latter the discovery of a Carrara marble image of Attis has led to suggestions of a Magna Mater/Cibeles cultic role for the statue.⁹⁶

⁹³ Carrasco, Ángel Elvira, 'Marfiles Coptos', 201-8.

⁹⁴ Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain*, 143.

⁹⁵ N.Hannestad, *Tradition in Late Antique Sculpture* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1994), 127, n.216. Hannestad suggests that at least one of the dark grey marble figures stylistically should be regarded as a late, rather than second-century, piece of probably Aphrodisian sculpture; Hannestad also refers, at 98-100, to a similar case of an imported earlier head of Venus, found in Toledo, apparently from south-western Asia, which had been reworked in the late Constantinian period by an Aphrodisian sculptor; In 'How did rising Christianity cope' Hannestad comments on the large quantity of pagan sculptures found at the Late Antique villa of Chiragan, just across the Pyrenees in South-West Gaul, which were also apparently the work of contemporaneous Aphrodisian sculptors, 187-193.

⁹⁶ Escribano, Fatás, *La Antigüedad Tardía*, 46, 57-8. The rather slim evidence from Demeter and fragments of a satyr sculpture and animal mosaics have produced proposals for a Bacchic-themed iconographical programme. See Illustration 21 (Demeter/Ceres), Appendix B; Illustration 22 (Attis), Appendix B. The Attis figure is discussed in Escribano, Fatás, 74-9; see also D. Fernández Galiano, *Mosaicos romanos del Convento Caesaraugustano* (Mallorca: Caja de Ahorros de Zaragoza, Aragón y Rioja, 1987), 71-100 on the programme of mosaics at Fortunatus.

Amongst the domestic statuary displayed in a late antique Hispano-Roman home must still have persisted the representations of the household gods, the lares, with their horns of plenty, protecting the *dominus* and his family.⁹⁷ Prudentius' denunciation of the custom of encouraging children to kiss these statues while entreating them with infantile petitions, once more presents his conflicted approach to image and religious piety. The child "pressed his lips to the stone pouring out childish petitions".⁹⁸ His words show evidence for art 'in practice' associated with private ritual devotion and beliefs. This practice was wrong in relation to 'pagan' icons. However, Prudentius, in *Peristephanon* IX, presents the Christian alternative. Before the painting of Cassian's martyrdom, he describes himself as embracing the saint's tomb and kissing the altar while praying for his desires to be granted, in the same way as the misguided infant had done, but in this case with a Christian purpose.⁹⁹

Apart from Prudentius' words, however, the particular rituals attached to iconographic images which might have been common practice in his milieu are difficult to ascertain. Sculptural relics from the days of the earlier Roman Empire were found in Calagurris itself, including first-century figures of Venus and Cupid and a fine head of Minerva from the second-century. A large head of Jupiter, dating from the second century, was also discovered in what was considered to be a temple. Also a fragment of a wall painting has survived from the first/second century which depicts the head and shoulders of the goddess Diana.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately all that remains in the form of decorative features in Calagurris itself, from the Late Antique period, are some fragments of non-figurative wall-paintings, although several elaborate

⁹⁷ For examples from Hispania see García y Bellido, *Esculturas romanas*, Vol.II, figs.98-100; P. Castanyer, J.Tremoleda, 'La villa romana de Vilauba, Banyoles (Provincia de Girona): Excavación de un ámbito de culto doméstico', *Madrider Mitteilungen*, 38 (1997), 163-175. A lararium was found at this Late Antique villa, although it seems to date from an earlier period. It contained figures of Lar, Mercury and Fortuna holding a cornucopia. Cf. *CS. I* (CCSL 126:193, lines 204 and 205), "lares...nigros" and "Fortunae...cum divite cornu".

⁹⁸ *CS. I* (CCSL 126:193, lines 203-12): "impressis silicem labris, puerilia vota fudit".

⁹⁹ *Pe. IX* (CCSL 126:329, lines 99-102), "complector tumulum,...altar tepescit ore, saxum pectore...tunc quod petebam quod timebam murmuro"; cf. n.98 above.

¹⁰⁰ Personal observation, Calahorra Museum, found at the 'La Clínica' site in Calagurris. Illustration 23, Appendix B.

coloured geometric mosaics from the third or fourth century reveal a high level of aesthetic appreciation in that period.¹⁰¹

Calagurris, however, sits on the river Ebro and along its valley and tributaries lie other sites where more substantial remains of villa life are preserved. The most iconographically complex of these seems to be the villa Arellano, not far from Calagurris on an Ebro tributary. Restructured in the fourth century the decor included an elaborate segmented mosaic containing images of the Muses in conversation with masters of literature and philosophy, a sure indication of the owner's desire to be seen as cultured and intellectually acute.¹⁰² It is tempting to see this as a place where the local villa-poet Prudentius would have been welcome to perform his work, and where, as noted by Bowes, he could be seen as a marker of the owner's cultural status.¹⁰³ Although the fact that the villa may have been a centre for the worship of Cybele and Attis might have given Prudentius pause, in view of the scorn poured by him on this cult.¹⁰⁴ The excavator of the villa has interpreted the villa's fourth-century mosaics of the couple as referring to the myth of this mystery religion, but has also connected two altars decorated with bull's heads, found nearby, with the ritual sacrifice of bulls associated with the cult the combination implying active support for a pagan religion rather than merely a decorative theme for the home.¹⁰⁵ However, bull's head altars from the third and fourth centuries have been found in a swathe of land to the north of Calagurris, - ten in Zaragoza province and five in Navarra.¹⁰⁶ They seem to be associated with a cult with indigenous roots, as is witnessed by the altar from Ujue dedicated to the local god Lacubegis.¹⁰⁷ Prudentius is noted for providing a rare (and perhaps imagined) 'description' of a taurobolic rite, often assumed to be Mithraic, but it is likely that he was conscious that indigenous

¹⁰¹ Espinosa, *Calagurris*, 116, 128-9, 199; Personal observation, Museum of Calahorra – mosaics were found at three separate sites, Calle Enramada, Calle San Sebastian and Calle Cabezo. Illustration 24, Appendix B.

¹⁰² Blázquez, Mezquíriz, *Navarra*, CME.VII, 15-22.PL.2.

¹⁰³ As proposed in Chapter 2; Bowes, *Private Worship*, 179-180. "The villa-ekphraseis of Ausonius, Paulinus, Prudentius, and Sidonius Apollinaris were written in the shadow of these great villas, and were part and parcel of their status apparatus".

¹⁰⁴ *CS. II* (CCSL 126:213 and 229, lines 51-2, and 521-3); *Pe.X* (CCSL 126:337, lines 194-200).

¹⁰⁵ M. Mezquíriz Arujo, 'Arellano y las villas tardorromanas del valle del Ebro', in Fernández Ochoa et al., *Las villae tardorromanas*, 391-410, at 394-8; Mezquíriz, *La villa romana de Arellano*, 161-89.

¹⁰⁶ Vidal Alvarez, *La Escultura Hispánica*, II, 14, A.5 (Navarra) for discussion of bull's heads at Arellano, and 17-19, A.8 (Zaragoza).

¹⁰⁷ Illustrations 8 and 9, Appendix B; Mezquíriz, *Museo de Navarra*, 45.

Iberian cultic rites, connected to these altars, were still being performed around him.¹⁰⁸

Other late Roman homes varying in size and wealth were situated in the region along the valley of the Ebro, on either side of Calagurris, and exhibit more conventional iconography.¹⁰⁹ At Cabriana, to the north-west, Diana the huntress appears on a mosaic;¹¹⁰ near Tudela, to its south-east, the villa of El Ramalete, famous for its hunting mosaic, also displays a mosaic of *erotes* holding a cup, symbolic of fertility and prosperity;¹¹¹ fourth-century mosaic remains in Zaragoza include a scene of the judgement of Paris;¹¹² near Zaragoza the sculpture of a young bacchante was found;¹¹³ at La Malena, an elaborate mosaic depicts a couple, probably Cadmus and Harmonia, possibly the *dominus* and his bride, marrying in the propitious presence of the gods Jupiter, Juno, Neptune, Mercury and Hercules;¹¹⁴ to the north-east, on a tributary of the Ebro, the villa of Liedena contains a mosaic, albeit damaged, of a 'Triumph' of Bacchus.¹¹⁵ We can see, therefore, some extant evidence from Prudentius' surrounding communities of the kind of 'pagan' images which would trouble the poet.

Further down the Ebro, on a tributary at Fraga, the Villa Fortunatus is significant in its iconography. It is decorated with mosaics of Eros and Psyche, and Venus and Cupid, and more exceptionally contains the remains of a late antique capital carved with scenes of the Rape of Europa and Leda and the Swan.¹¹⁶ It also, however, possesses a rare villa decoration from the period incorporating Christian symbolism. This is in the form of a mosaic containing a chi-rho combined with alpha and omega which is situated in the centre of the letters, FORTU ... NATUS, (possibly the name

¹⁰⁸ *Pe.X* (CCSL 126: 364-5, lines 1006-1050); See Chapter 2, 64-6, for further discussion of Prudentius and the taurobolium.

¹⁰⁹ Mezquíz, 'Arellano', 403-8, for details of these villas.

¹¹⁰ Blázquez, J-M., *Mosaicos romanos de la Real Academia de la Historia, Ciudad Real, Toledo, Madrid y Cuenca*, CME V (Madrid: Instituto Español de Arqueología "Rodrigo Caro" del CSIC, 1982), pl.41.

¹¹¹ Blázquez, Mezquíz, *Navarra*, CME VII, pl.42, 69-73.

¹¹² Illustration 28, Appendix B; A Bacchus 'Triumph' from the second/third century was also found in the city (Illustration 18, Appendix B) and a similar-dated mosaic of Eros and Pan, Beltrán Lloris, *Zaragoza*, 81, Fig. 10.

¹¹³ Gorges, *Villas*, Z 19, 351-2.

¹¹⁴ Escribano, Fatás, *La Antigüedad Tardía*, 47-65 on the image portraying the wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia; Arce, 'Otium', at 25, suggests the couple are the landlord and his bride

¹¹⁵ Blázquez, Mezquíz, *Navarra*, CME VII, pl. 28.

¹¹⁶ Illustration 26 (Eros and Psyche) and 27 (Venus and Cupid), Appendix B; Blázquez, *Mosaicos de España*, 421,420; Vidal Alvarez, *La Escultura*, A.4, 11-14.

of the villa-owner).¹¹⁷ Although this is dated towards the end of the fourth century and might have been positioned after the mythological images, at first sight it does seem possible that we can identify a *dominus* who was demonstrating his Christian belief while remaining comfortable with the culture of the classical pagan past.¹¹⁸ However, this assumes that ‘Fortunatus’ was aware of the religious importance of the symbolism attached to the chi-rho. It is also feasible that for him this had an apotropaic function, akin to the good luck symbol of the swastika with which the Estada villa-owner decorated his home, particularly since, in the same way, it is situated alongside images of fertility and abundance.¹¹⁹ The chi-rho thus may not necessarily have signified Christian belief for ‘Fortunatus’.

In the main, therefore, it would appear, from the extant evidence demonstrated in this section, that the artistic ambiance of Hispania during Prudentius’ lifetime was largely non-Christian. We shall see in the next section if evidence exists to countermand this impression.

III. Christian Iconography in Prudentius’ Hispania.

The wealth of non-Christian ‘pagan’ imagery in Hispania contrasts with the comparative dearth of Christian iconography. In the century before Prudentius wrote his verses describing the painted scenes he had witnessed in Italy, Hispano-Romans do not seem to have taken on board to any great extent the possibility of using art as a way of delivering the Christian message. A decision of the Spanish Council of Elvira (Iliberis), c.305AD, may have contributed to the reluctance to display images of the holy in Hispania: “it is resolved that pictures ought not to be in church lest that which is painted on walls be honoured and adored”.¹²⁰ This canon might reflect traditional concerns about Mosaic prohibition, or the fear that Christians, under pagan influence, could be seduced into idolatry. However, since Elvira was a local synod, attended solely by clergy from Hispania, it seems possible that this was introduced in response to local Spanish needs and attitudes which remain unknowable, although it is feasible that the presence of the powerful prelate Ossius

¹¹⁷ Illustration 6, Appendix B.

¹¹⁸ Fernández Galiano, *Mosaicos romanos del convento Caesaraugustano*, 86-88, and at 85 assumes a Christian owner displaying classical art; note also the Attis statue found there, 188 above.

¹¹⁹ Beltrán Lloris, *Caesar Augusta*, at 43 suggests FORTU – NATUS could be interpreted as the birth of fortune; Illustration 20 (Estada), Appendix B.

¹²⁰ Vives, *Concilios*, Canon 36: “Placuit picturas in ecclesia esse non debere ne quod colitur et adoratur in parietibus depingatur”.

of Córdoba influenced this decision.¹²¹ Later on Bishop Gregory (who died in 392AD) of the same city, Elvira, prefigured Prudentius' own views and expressed doubts over whether the truth could be found in images. The bishop stated that:

as painters seize on the faces of others and paint with various colours images which look like the truth, so that either, while an empty shadow deludes in contemplation, that which does not exist is believed to exist, or, while the gaze is held by an imitation which is sufficiently deceptive, truth is shown by them: so in the Old Testament also an image of truth was discerned, not truth itself.¹²²

Gregory, like Prudentius, was proposing that the skill of the artist could deceive the viewer into believing that a false image represented the truth.

In spite of his condemnation of some artistic representations, Prudentius' opinion that it could be a powerful force in promoting the Christian faith is nevertheless evident, not only from his ekphraseis of the martyr paintings and their pivotal role in his stories of Saints Cassian and Hippolytus, but also from the set of verses composed by him - the *Tituli Historiarum* discussed above. These were lines which seem to have been inscribed or intended for inscription under depictions of scenes from the Old and New Testament, presumably in a religious building. Gennadius, writing in the mid-fifth century, in his tribute to Prudentius, calls them the *Trocheum* and, perhaps significantly, lists them first in his review of the poet's works.¹²³ This may reveal an importance attached to the function of these verses as a means of instruction to a Hispano-Gallic audience, less familiar with biblical stories than 'pagan' myths, in the period not long after the poet's death. Unfortunately no evidence survives to show that Prudentius' work was used in the manner intended.¹²⁴

¹²¹ R. Grigg, 'Constantine the Great and the cult without Images', *Viator* 8 (1977), 1-32. Grigg has noted that Ossius was an early advisor to Constantine on Christian matters and that there is a lack of evidence that Constantinian churches were decorated with images, 28, 32.

¹²² Gregory of Elvira, *Tractatus de Libris Scriptorum* IV, (PL. Suppl. 1, 379): "sicut pictores solent vultus rapere alienos et verisimiles imagines variis coloribus pingere, ut aut, dum inanis umbra contemplatione ludificat, credatur esse quod non est, aut, dum obtutus oculorum fallenti satis imitatione perstringitur, ab eis veritas demonstratur, ita et in veteri testamento imago veritatis, non tamen ipsa veritas, cernebatur".

¹²³ Gennadius, *de Viris Inlustribus*, no. 66, 13.

¹²⁴ There is, however, evidence of this function elsewhere in the poetry of Paulinus, who refers to "titulis" beneath the paintings on the walls at his church at Nola. Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina*, 27 (CSEL 30:285-8, lines 511-595) at line 584.

Although other forms of paleo-Christian artwork may no longer remain, ‘Christian’ funerary art in Hispania from the fourth century has survived, mainly in the form of relief carvings on sarcophagi. This may have provided a prestigious way, especially in its most ornate form, for wealthy Christians to show their Christian credentials when they laid their dead to rest. Material display could mark a choice by the deceased’s family to affiliate themselves with a Christian group within a fourth-century social and political structure increasingly powered by Christian adherence.¹²⁵ It is also possible, however, that the elite adopted Christian funerary iconography for no better reason than it appealed aesthetically, without seeing any great distinction between the art of the new religion and the art of the old.¹²⁶

In Hispania, sarcophagi and, for the less wealthy, *stelae*, had been commissioned by the elite since the second century to entomb their dead with prestige. The more elaborate of these were decorated with carvings, often of epic or mythological scenes, which, to quote Peter Stewart, could make “allusive comments on the life or death of the deceased”.¹²⁷ Although these scenes were often stereotyped and abstract, and the commissioner may have had only a cursory knowledge of the story, their images could provide an idealised ‘biographical’ memorial to the dead. Examples of sarcophagi found in Spain from the second and third century show scenes of the vengeance of Orestes, signifying his heroic qualities; images of the Muses which evoke *paideia* and indicate cultural pretensions; and scenes from the abduction of Proserpina to the underworld, and the death and resurrection of Hippolytus symbolising the tragedy of the death and man’s hopes for eternity.¹²⁸ A common motif in the third century was that of the four seasons, depicted as winged figures, which served as symbols of time passing, yet enduring for eternity.¹²⁹ An example from the mid-third century from Evora in Portugal, shows the seasons flanking a

¹²⁵ See I. Morris, *Death- Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. Chapters 2 and 6, on the way people choose to commemorate their dead or represent their status through particular burial rituals; also I. Hodder, ‘The Social in Archaeological Theory’ in R. Preucel, L. Meskell (eds.) *A Companion to Social Archaeology* (Malden, Ma.: Blackwell, 2004), 23-42, re material culture styles as maintaining group differentiation and creating identities, at 29.

¹²⁶ See section 1 above regarding Prudentius’ audience and the distinction between pagan and Christian art forms.

¹²⁷ Stewart, *Social History*, 73. See 70-76 on pagan sarcophagi and their decoration.

¹²⁸ García y Bellido, *Esculturas romanas*, n.249, Orestes, and Illustration 25, Appendix B; nos. 254, 255, 256, 260, The Muses; nos.250-2, Proserpina; n.262, Hippolytus, and Illustration 13, Appendix B.

¹²⁹ R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome: The Late Empire: Roman Art, AD 200-400* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), on the popularity of this theme, 63

bust of the deceased supported by two deities.¹³⁰ These “guardians of eternity”, which were precursors of the angel-figure as developed in Christian iconography, continued to be used into the fourth century in Spain.¹³¹ Fragments of two sarcophagi from Barcelona, one decorated with personifications of autumn and winter, and the other with figures of the deceased with autumn, date from the Constantinian era, or later.¹³² Themes, therefore, which had been popular as pre-Christian funerary images could be adapted to provide continuity with new Christian decorative funerary forms.¹³³

Nonetheless, while the Spanish elite might have been surrounded by ancient classical culture in their homes, many were accompanied to their final resting place by images from Christian narratives - which in the fourth century began to replace the old scenes from pagan myths. These frequently took the form of motifs taken from the Old and New Testaments. Christianity was a religion of the text and it was the visual representations of the text which provided the artistic record. Until the middle of the fourth century the majority of marble sarcophagi in Hispania were imported from workshops in Rome, bringing with them a measure of exclusivity and prestige. For example, two sarcophagi found in Zaragoza and a third at nearby Castiliscar would have needed shipping, often being hauled by cable, at great cost, from the Mediterranean coast along most of the navigable length of the river Ebro.¹³⁴ The subjects depicted on the sarcophagi which were considered suitable for funerary iconography were concepts directly transmitted from Italy, often from standard stock.¹³⁵ Thus, their significance was imposed on Hispano-Roman visual consciousness, even if, as in the case of the mosaic myths, these motifs may not always have been fully understood by the client. There is, nevertheless, a

¹³⁰ García y Bellido, *Esculturas romanas*, n.270, and also n.272.

¹³¹ Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome: The Late Empire*, 63; Seasons figures also accompany the Christian images at Centcelles.

¹³² M.Clavería Nadal, *Corpus des esculturas del imperio romano España*, Vol. 1: Los sarcófagos romanos de Cataluña (Murcia: Asociación Internacional de Arqueología Clásica, 2001), 17, nos.7,8.

¹³³ It also should be noted that early Christian images of Christ, depicting Him as a beardless beautiful young man, had been influenced by images of Apollo. See F. Harley, ‘Christianity and the Transformation of Classical Art’, in P. Rousseau (ed.) *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (Malden, Ma.; Oxford: Wiley -Blackwell, 2009), 306-26, on the Christ-figure on the Julius Bassus sarcophagus. Cf. a similar young Christ which can be seen on the Castiliscar sarcophagus found near Zaragoza, illustrated in Escribano, Fatás, *La Antigüedad Tardía*, 106-7, Fig.99.

¹³⁴ Escribano, Fatás, *La Antigüedad Tardía*, 44-5, 99-108, Figs.97,98, 99; Illustrations 11 and 12, Appendix B.

¹³⁵ G.Ripoll López, ‘Sarcófagos de la Antigüedad Tardía Hispánica: Importaciones y Talleres Locales’, *Antiquité Tardive 1* (1993), 153-8, at 153. These sarcophagi could be made to order.

relationship between the images portrayed on these sarcophagi and Prudentius' verses which reveals an incipient elite Christian visual culture. The poet was often writing on themes which were beginning to be familiar to his audience, perhaps if Christian, from the homiletic exegesis of Spanish church figures such as Potamius of Lisbon and Pacianus of Barcelona.¹³⁶ The holy scriptures themselves may have been too 'plain' for the elite to appreciate, but the classical hexameter poems on the Gospels written by the Spaniard, Juvencus, could have educated a cultured audience, Christian or otherwise.¹³⁷

Throughout his work Prudentius alludes to biblical events and exemplars which would inspire and educate his readers/listeners. These references also frequently appear in the record of Christian art. There is a telling passage in the ninth Cathemerinon poem, a hymn written to be appropriate for every hour, which, in its verses, reminds the reader to praise the deeds of Christ (*gesta Christi*), the leader of our salvation (*dux salutis*). In this poem, Prudentius makes a list of the miracles which Christ has performed; the water turned into wine at Cana; the restoration of sight to the blind man; the healing of the woman who bleeds incessantly; the raising of Lazarus from the dead; the feeding of thousands with five loaves and two fishes; and the healing of the paralytic who takes up his bed and walks.¹³⁸ These same miracles of Christ appear again and again represented on the more elaborately carved Christian sarcophagi found in Hispania from the first half of the fourth century. The decoration on the sarcophagus often consisted of a frieze tightly packed with figures showing a succession of biblical scenes barely separable one from the other, often flanking a central figure of an orant. The overall message to be taken from these scenes was that salvation was to be found through the Lord. The miracles listed by Prudentius were among the most common found in these friezes, but other popular images depicted Saint Peter and the cock-crow, Peter miraculously striking water from a rock, the arrest of Peter, Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac, Adam and Eve, the adoration of the Magi, Jonah saved from the whale, and the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace.¹³⁹ All of these biblical tales, with the exception of the arrest of Peter,

¹³⁶ *Potamii Episcopi*, (CCSL 69A: 150-267); Pacianus (CCSL 69B: 39-153).

¹³⁷ Green, *Latin Epics*, 'Juvencus', 128. Green refers to Lactantius' complaint as to the ordinary quality of scripture writing.

¹³⁸ *Cath. IX* (CCSL 126:49-50, lines 94 and 28-69).

¹³⁹ Sotomayor, 'Palaeo-Christian Funerary Sculpture' contains a distribution list of sarcophagi subjects to that date, 121-3; See also Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos*. Typically an example from near

receive prominence in the work of Prudentius.¹⁴⁰ Prudentius' admiration for the saint is celebrated in *Peristephanon* XII and three of the *Tituli Historiarum* and, significantly, he devotes the long preface to *Contra Symmachum* II to the story of Peter walking on water with Christ.¹⁴¹ It seems likely that the importance given to the deeds of Peter is (at least partially) due to many sarcophagi being sourced from Rome, where Peter was revered as its first bishop. A sarcophagus found in Zaragoza, a city which Prudentius distinguishes in his work, is noted for its display of three images from Peter's life: the miracle of the fountain of water, his arrest and the cock-crow, suggesting that the saint had some significance for the residents of the Ebro valley area too.¹⁴²

As the century progressed we find new iconographic developments in Hispano-Gallic art: the centralised theme of Christ crucified and victorious, as represented by a cross surmounted by a chi-rho, and as a central figure surrounded by his apostles.¹⁴³ Another development was that the export of marble sarcophagi from Rome declined in the second half of the fourth century, and the production of sarcophagi from local Spanish workshops such as Tarragona and Bureba in Burgos increased.¹⁴⁴ These were often ornately carved if less skilfully made, but showed that Spanish craftsmen were now involved in a tradition of creating Christian art. For example, a recently discovered fourth-century sarcophagus lid which illustrates the story of Jonah has been subject to petrological analysis and found to be made from

Constantinian Toledo showed Lazarus, the blind man, Adam and Eve, and the paralytic on one side of an orant, and the miracles of the loaves and fishes and water to wine, Abraham's sacrifice and Peter and the fountain on the other, Pl.2.1, Villa Layos, Toledo.

¹⁴⁰ *Cath. I* (CCSL 126 :4-5, lines 49-68), celebrates Christ's resurrection at the cock-crow; *Pe.XII* (CCSL 126: 380, 33-34) (The Passion of the Apostles Peter and Paul), in which Prudentius refers to a fountain at Peter's tomb; *Cath.XII* (CCSL 126: 66, 41-8) on Abraham's sacrifice; *Tituli Hist.1* (Adam and Eve), *Tituli Hist..XXVII* (The Magi) (CCSL 126: 391, lines 1-4; 395, lines 105-8); *Cath.VII* (CCSL 126:38-9, lines 101-140), which tells the story of Jonah whose miraculous escape came to symbolise resurrection; *Apoth.* (CCSL 126: 81-2, lines 129-154), in which Prudentius attributes the saving of the Hebrews to the Son, rather than the Father.

¹⁴¹ *CS.II* (CCSL 126: *Praefatio*, 209-11, lines 1-66).

¹⁴² *Peristephanon* IV celebrates the eighteen martyrs of Caesaraugusta; Escribano and Fatás, *La Antigüedad Tardía*, 102-5. This sarcophagus, known as the 'sarcófago de la trilogía Petrina', is located in the later church of Saint Engracia and dated to c.340 AD. The importance of Peter is emphasized as his images on one side of the front of the sarcophagus are matched by scenes from the life of Christ on the other; Illustration 12, Appendix B.

¹⁴³ Ripoll López, 'Sarcófagos', 154; Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos*, 199-206, Hellin, pl.7.1, 207-9, Valencia, pl.7.2. both dated c.370-400AD, for example.

¹⁴⁴ Ripoll López, 'Sarcófagos', 154-5, and fig.2, 156.

Estremoz (Portugal) marble.¹⁴⁵ Another example from the Bureba workshop, found at nearby Quitanabureba, is made in local limestone decorated with crudely drawn figures. Although showing on one side biblical motifs of Moses receiving the law, the Good Shepherd and Abraham's sacrifice, it bears no resemblance stylistically to earlier imported works. On the other side of the sarcophagus, however, is an intriguing scene which has been interpreted as the figure of St. Perpetua holding a ladder leading to two stars, symbolising the saint's vision of her ascent into heaven.¹⁴⁶ If this were the case it would be a very early artistic representation in Hispania of a non-biblical martyr.

A number of the subjects displayed on fourth and early fifth century sarcophagi found in Spain appear in Prudentius' *Tituli Historiarum*. These are Adam and Eve (I), Moses receiving the Law (X), David and Goliath (XIX), the newborn Christ with the three Magi (XXVI) and (XXVII), the baptism of Christ (XXX), the water changed into wine (XXXII), the miracle of the loaves and fishes (XXXVII), the raising of Lazarus (XXXVIII), and the Saviour's passion (XLII), as represented by the carving of the *Crux Invicta*.¹⁴⁷ These give credence to the likelihood that the purpose of the *Tituli Historiarum* was actually to provide inscriptions for paintings or mosaics displayed, or to be displayed, probably in a place of worship, since one can see that some of these motifs already existed in the canon of the Christian art of Hispania. Renata Pillinger, in her admirably detailed book on the *Tituli Historiarum*, is of this opinion, and provides lavish examples of artwork which correspond with the images from Prudentius' verses.¹⁴⁸ However, she has used as evidence sources which were located mainly in Italy, many of which, such as the mosaic frieze in the mid-fifth century church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, are from the period subsequent to Prudentius' death, whilst apparently ignoring the existence of iconography in the poet's own country which would have established that a tradition was alive in Hispania for illustrating these Christian subjects.

¹⁴⁵ C. Fernández Ochoa, M. Bendala Galán, V. García-Entero, S. Vidal Álvarez, 'Cubierta de sarcófago con el ciclo de Jonás hallada en Carranque (Toledo)', *AEspA* 84 (2011), 231-242. This was reused in a Visigothic necropolis at Carranque. Prudentius tells the Jonah story in *Cath. VII* (CCSL 126: 38-9, lines 101-140).

¹⁴⁶ Vidal Álvarez, 'La escultura Hispánica', CSIR 2, 40-44, B2; See Chapter 3, 113.

¹⁴⁷ Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos*, as exemplified by the sarcophagus from Valencia, pl. 7.2.

¹⁴⁸ Pillinger, *Die Tituli Historiarum*, 12-15; Pls. 1-77, and 20-117 for commentary.

In Hispania the tangible piece of Christian art which comes closest in concept to the *Tituli Historiarum* is the mosaic frieze which runs around the dome of a large room in the villa at Centcelles. This most important archaeological and art historical record contains religious images from Christian iconography common to those which appeared on the sarcophagi. It lies between a lower frieze of hunting scenes and a higher one of enthroned figures within four panels, separated by images of the four seasons, who may have taken on their post-pagan role in this context. Because of the religious content of the mosaics, and a crypt-like space in the floor, the villa has been considered in the past to be a mausoleum, but it seems likely that it was a grand reception room for the *dominus*.¹⁴⁹ Although, sadly, much of the mosaic decoration is lost to time, the central frieze can still be seen to contain the salvation themes mentioned from the sarcophagi and Prudentius' works; Lazarus, the three Hebrews in the fire, Jonah thrown into the sea, Daniel in the lions' den and Adam and Eve. The theme of deliverance by God is continued in a sector depicting Noah's ark, which Prudentius highlights in his third *Tituli Historiarum* inscription, and another showing an image of the Good Shepherd, whose protection the poet invokes in the eighth *Cathemerinon* hymn.¹⁵⁰ These make up the remaining identifiable images.¹⁵¹ Although this is probably a secular location, the owner, who could be depicted seated in the higher frieze, may have hoped that the presence of this impressive iconography would provide testimony to his visitors of the strength of his Christian faith and that his preservation and redemption would be aided by the images portrayed.¹⁵² However, one must not overlook the possibility that this was an artistic display, designed to impress, by an aristocrat, living within a Christian cultural and social environment but not necessarily subscribing to its attendant beliefs.

There is some limited evidence of mosaics in Hispania in the fourth and early fifth century possibly displaying Christian belief, other than those at Centcelles and the Villa Fortunatus, but one must return to the funerary record to find these. A

¹⁴⁹ Arce, *Centcelles*, contains articles discussing the iconography of this site. See Chapter 2, n.139 for remarks re a funerary function.

¹⁵⁰ Prudentius, *Tituli Hist.III* (CCSL 126: 390, lines 9-12); *Cath. VIII* (CCSL 126: 44-5, lines 31-52); see Illustrations 10 (Jonah) and 29 (Three Hebrews), Appendix B: examples of deliverance subjects.

¹⁵¹ Isla Frez, 'La epifanía' in Arce, *Centcelles*, 37-50, for discussion, and the less acceptable theory that Tobias and the angel are represented.

¹⁵² J.Arce, 'Nuevas reflexiones sobre la iconografía de la cúpula de Centcelles', 11-20, in Arce, *Centcelles*.

number of funeral mosaics have been found, the most significant of these being documented by Palol.¹⁵³ Unfortunately dating of these tends to be imprecise, making it difficult to judge how familiar Prudentius' audience would have been with this kind of art. Their dating is largely based on stylistic resemblances to those of North Africa, where this type of memorial has been found in large quantities, but which were in production from the fourth to the sixth centuries.¹⁵⁴ For example, the finest of the Hispania funerary mosaics was found at Tarragona and features the figure of a togated male, Optimus.¹⁵⁵ Although it is surely Christian, opinion varies as to its date, which could be as late as the sixth century, and thus later than the time-frame under review.¹⁵⁶

While Christian artistic influences like this might be expected to have reached a coastal provincial capital like Tarragona, there is evidence of the use of these funerary mosaics penetrating inland into the rural areas of Tarraconensis by the late fourth century. Two figural mosaics were discovered close together at a site close to a tributary of the Ebro, and although these are cruder in design and execution, coin finds seem to date them more safely to an earlier period than 'Optimus'.¹⁵⁷ In one of these the deceased, 'Rufo', is seen with hands in an orant position, a chi-rho above the head while below the somewhat truncated body are depicted two doves (a pagan symbol adopted as Christian).¹⁵⁸ The mosaic of Macedonius contains the inscription PRB suffixed to his name, possibly indicating that he was a Christian presbyter.¹⁵⁹ The figure is depicted in the Good Shepherd pose, a sheep about his shoulders, although the image could be seen as a syncretistic reference to the same pose associated with the god Hermes. The chi-rho, doves and the Good Shepherd image, nevertheless, suggest a knowledge of symbols used in Christian art. Although the dedicators may have been drawn to these for their decorative and social value rather

¹⁵³ Palol, *Arqueología cristiana*, 321-345.

¹⁵⁴ N.Duval, *La mosaïque funéraire dans l'art paléochrétien* (Ravenna: Longo, 1976), 72-3 for reservations concerning Palol's insistence on African influence, especially regarding mosaics from Tarragona.

¹⁵⁵ Palol, *Arqueología cristiana*, 339-40. Plate CI.

¹⁵⁶ Alföldy, *Die Römischen Inschriften*, 412, n.937. The various dates proposed are summarised here by Alföldy. However, the inscription includes 'sancta Crhisti' which, combined with Optimus' hand depicted as raised in benediction, seems to confirm Christian belief.

¹⁵⁷ These two were found at Monte Cillas, Coscojuela de Fantova (Huesca) together with four other less well-preserved remains of funerary mosaics. Palol, *Arqueología cristiana*, 331-4.

¹⁵⁸ Escribano, Fatás, *La Antigüedad Tardía*, 81, fig.81. Rufo's mosaic is also decorated with circles, a feature which seems typical of the late Roman period in Hispania; See n.64, Estada villa mosaic.

¹⁵⁹ Escribano, Fatás, *La Antigüedad Tardía*, 84, figs. 84 and 100; Fernández Galiano, *Mosaicos romanos de Convento Caesaraugustano*, 65 on Macedonius as a presbyter.

than by a commitment to their religious significance, the mosaics show an active transmission of these ideas to an area some distance from the coast and city centres.

The North African style of mosaic appears again at Alfaro, further up the river Ebro. Although less ambitious in design than the Monte Cilla mosaics, this has more significance for the student of Prudentius, since it lies only 25 kilometres from Calagurris. This tomb cover, of Ursicinus, which came from a now lost necropolis, has the characteristics of models from North Africa.¹⁶⁰ Its long narrow shape is compartmentalised in the African fashion. The first contains a scallop-shell, the second a bust of the dead man inscribed, 'Ursicinus in pace do[rmit]', the third a chi-rho within a circle of laurel inscribed 'per nomen dei', and the fourth contains the words 'recesit ann. XXXVI remisit filiam ann. VIII uxor fecit melete'.¹⁶¹ It has been dated, based on coin finds post 361AD, and stylistically, to the latter part of the fourth century. The tomb seems to represent tangible evidence of a Christian community living within the surroundings of Prudentius' home, which accepted the use of art in a Christian context, and also were in communication with concepts of Christian iconography from outside of Hispania.

Finally we should note that there is no archaeological evidence to show securely that the few buildings that might be identified as churches in fourth century in Hispania were decorated in any way.¹⁶² Although the fact that the Council of Elvira forbade pictures on the walls of churches suggests that this was indeed a known practice, either from within Hispania or from elsewhere. A substantial domed building adjacent to the Carranque villa, which the excavators describe as the oldest Christian basilica in Hispania, contained many fragments of mosaics, painted stucco, porphyry *opus sectile*, and marble indicating a decorative programme for walls and floors. Nevertheless, since the decorative remains were found in destruction levels and their date cannot be determined accurately, the probability that this was a fourth-century decorated church must be doubtful.¹⁶³ Likewise, at Elche a fourth-century

¹⁶⁰ The museum in Calahorra contains pottery from Tunisia dated to the third/fourth century (personal observation). This indicates that links existed between North Africa and the Calagurris region in the later Roman period.

¹⁶¹ Palol, *Arqueología cristiana*, 335-6,344; Blázquez et al, *Museo Arqueológico Nacional*, CME IX, pl.39.

¹⁶² Bowes, '“Une coterie espagnole”', at 193 – 235 lists known Christian buildings in Hispania, and problems in dating them; cf. Chavarría Arnau, 'Churches and aristocracies', who suggests no rural churches existed before 500AD, 164; Chapter 2, 67-71.

¹⁶³ Fernández Galiano, *Carranque*, 71-80; Bowes, '“Une coterie espagnole”', 218-227.

building proposed as a church, and decorated with elaborate mosaics including cruciform shapes, was most probably not converted into a basilica until the second half of the fifth century.¹⁶⁴ Cities in Hispania, on the whole, do not appear to have acquired basilicas, which might have been decorated, until the mid-fifth century, and worship seems to have taken place, before then, in house churches like the large *domus* in Barcelona which subsequently became absorbed into the fifth-century episcopal complex.¹⁶⁵ Similarly a basilica was not constructed in Mérida until the second half of the fifth century, so that Prudentius' extravagant description of Eulalia's shrine, which appears in actuality to have been a modest, single-aisled, apsed building, starts to look like a work of hyperbole, if not pure imagination.¹⁶⁶ Prudentius writes of a building decorated with shining marble, a gleaming roof of gold panels and a floor covered with cut stones like a rose-covered meadow red with various flowers.¹⁶⁷ As discussed in Chapter Three, this description closely matches the appearance attributed to the temple of the mind praised by Prudentius in *Contra Symmachum* II.¹⁶⁸ This similarity must also cast doubts as to the existence of the shrine depicted in Prudentius' words.

The above sparse examples of Christian iconographic material evidence, which are mainly funerary in function, therefore, point to the likelihood that, at the beginning of the fifth century, the most significant visual culture of Hispania was still predominately represented by traditional images from the non-Christian past.

IV. How Prudentius 'saw' the Martyr Images – Visual Experience to Written Text.

In the same way that the material record fails to corroborate Prudentius' description of the shrine of Saint Eulalia in Mérida, it can be argued that the visual experiences which Prudentius set down for his Hispano-Gallic audience were works

¹⁶⁴ Palol, *Arqueología cristiana*, 201-210 (proposed also as a synagogue); Bowes, ' "une coterie espagnole" ', 207. Dating was based on coin finds and the style of the mosaics.

¹⁶⁵ Beltrán, *From Barcino*, 74-7.

¹⁶⁶ P. Mateos Cruz, 'Augusta Emerita, de capital de la *Diocesis Hispaniarum* a sede temporal Visigoda' in G. Ripoll and J. Gurt (eds.), *Sedes Regiae*, (ann.400-700) (Barcelona: Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres, 2000), 498-503. Fig.4. Mateos Cruz is at pains to point out that Prudentius refers to a *tumul* not a basilica or a church. See Ch.3 above for details of the archaeology.

¹⁶⁷ *Pe. III* (CCSL 126:284, lines 196-200): "Tecta corusca super rutilant de laquearibus aureolis saxaque caesa solum variant, floribus ut rosulenta putes prata rubescere multimodis".

¹⁶⁸ *CS. II* (CCSL 126:220, lines 249-254). In these verses Prudentius again displays a conflicted attitude to art and the spiritual, since his God prefers a "templum mentis" to one of marble. See Chapter 3, n.196.

of imagination created by a committed proselytizer. In spite of this, I concluded in Chapter Four that there was a strong probability that the poet had actually witnessed the paintings that he described. Although no extant artworks have been found which match precisely the depictions which Prudentius tells us that he saw, I suggested instances of Christian iconography which could give clues as to the kind of images that the poet might have encountered, which might confirm the words of his ekphraseis.¹⁶⁹ Based on these examples I questioned Laurence Nees' assertion that: "it is surely a mistake to take Prudentius at his word; the detailed and graphic verbal descriptions he provides is exactly what cannot be paralleled in early Christian images".¹⁷⁰ Although I disagreed with Nees and contended that visual evidence does exist which supports Prudentius' ekphraseis, in fact, our understanding of these texts should not depend on the possible appearance and type of the wall paintings. A more complex approach is needed in order to understand the different ways in which Prudentius might have translated his experiences at the tombs into words describing the images of the martyrs.

Nees' doubt centres on a simplistic attitude that Prudentius was seeing the paintings with the eyes of a modern viewer. As Peter Wells puts it: "What a twenty-first-century Londoner might consider a realistic representation of a person might be quite different from what an individual in another time and place might consider realistic...what one person might consider realistic another would consider highly stylised".¹⁷¹ This is not the place to become involved in past debates as to whether there was a 'decline in the quality of art' in Late Antiquity, as represented by the stylistic change from the naturalism and illusionism of classical art to the late Roman predilection for abstraction and symbolism.¹⁷² The supposed images in the catacomb and at the shrine, if based on extant examples, may have lacked the classical naturalism which in our eyes ought to inspire Prudentius' passionate response. However, these representations were likely to be consistent with the norms of artistic expression and expectations of his time, and in Prudentius' eyes were as realistic as any of the traditional non-Christian works of art which he praised elsewhere.

¹⁶⁹ See Chapter 4, 154-164.

¹⁷⁰ Nees, *Early Medieval Art*, 210-1. Nees contrasts the "rigid frontality and formality" of early Christian ivories with the vigour of the paintings described by Prudentius.

¹⁷¹ P. Wells, *Image and Response in Early Europe* (London: Duckworth, 2008), 18.

¹⁷² Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 4-7 for a discussion of this. I have already intimated in this chapter that some mosaics of Hispania, c.400 AD show what we would see as a deterioration in representational skills; See also Elsner, *Imperial Rome*, 16-23.

Since we do not know what images Prudentius saw, we also cannot tell if these could be open to alternative understandings. As Jaś Elsner points out: “People relate to works of art in different ways, depending on different contexts and at different times”.¹⁷³ Elsner uses this proposition to highlight different viewers’ frames of interpretation – the fact that any work of art can give rise, according to the mindset of the observer, to varying responses and meanings. His prime example is that a non-Christian viewer of a picture of a fish would see it as something to eat, catch or cook, while an early Christian, seeing the same image would see it as a symbol evoking Christ.¹⁷⁴ This proposition can be helpful if we consider the possibility that the mythic Hippolytus, whose death so resembled that of the Christian Hippolytus described by Prudentius, could have appeared as an allegorical or symbolic representation of the martyr in the catacomb painting.¹⁷⁵

It is also feasible that Prudentius’ experiences could have had a visionary as well as a visual quality to them. I have already considered in Chapter Four the possibility that Prudentius, while gazing at the saint’s image in a heightened emotional state, could have believed that he was in the presence of Cassian himself.¹⁷⁶ Analogously, Georgia Frank, in her book on the religious sensibilities of Late Antique pilgrims, reminds us of extreme cases of the visionary phenomenon whereby the pilgrim experiences “a vivid perception of a past biblical event that is triggered by seeing the physical holy place”.¹⁷⁷ This is exemplified by Jerome’s account of Paula’s encounters when visiting the Holy sites where “so great was her ardour and enthusiasm” that she was able to ‘see’ the nativity scene at Bethlehem.¹⁷⁸ With what Jerome calls “the eyes of faith” (*fidei oculis*) Paula saw “the infant wrapped in [swaddling] clothes and crying in the manger, the Magi adoring Him, the star shining overhead, the virgin mother, the foster-father, the shepherds coming by night” and “the slaughtered innocents, the raging Herod, Joseph and Mary fleeing into

¹⁷³ Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 1.

¹⁷⁴ Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 1.

¹⁷⁵ Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 271-81 on the symbolic use of Hercules as a Christianised salvatory figure in the Via Latina catacomb.

¹⁷⁶ See Chapter 4, 138; cf. Platt, *Facing the Gods*, 47, on the propensity of the ancient Greeks to view images of the gods as epiphanic embodiments of the gods themselves.

¹⁷⁷ G. Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes; Pilgrims to Living Saints in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 106, especially Chapter 4.

¹⁷⁸ Jerome, *Epistulae*, Ep. 108.9 (CSEL 55: 315, 4-5): “Tanto ardore ac studio”.

Egypt”.¹⁷⁹ In the same way that Paula’s “eyes of faith” could conjure and engage with these complex scenes, Prudentius may have had similar elaborate visionary experiences, perhaps prompted by the guardian’s words at Cassian’s tomb or foreknowledge of the Hippolytus story rather than by biblical episodes, which went beyond what could have been visible to him at the holy sites of the martyrs.

Peter Wells’ study on the visuality of the past and human responses to images offers a useful framework within which one can try to understand how Prudentius could translate his visual experiences in Italy into textual descriptions of the martyr deaths.¹⁸⁰ Wells draws attention to the physical process of seeing, and our modern understanding of the fact that we do not see a simple projection of the outside world on our retinas. Light passes through the eye to the retina where it stimulates the photoreceptors which transmit information to the brain. Therefore, “it is our brain that sees not our eyes”. The brain filters and selects the information which it receives, part of which process depends on the brain’s previous experience and stored memory. “What the individual has seen and responded to before largely determines what will attract the brain’s conscious attention”.¹⁸¹ Furthermore the way the brain operates to interpret visual images differs from person to person, so that each will see differently, depending on their accumulated experience of seeing and responding to images.¹⁸² Thus the way that we each perceive things depends directly on the memories built up from our own past visual experiences, so that we understand what we see in relation to those experiences.¹⁸³ The content of the paintings would have been interpreted by Prudentius’ brain according to his past accumulated visual experiences – visual memories which must have been formed through his background in Hispania, and paradoxically derived in part from the non-Christian artistic tradition he had absorbed there. The colourful and dynamic images remembered from the ornamentation of the villas of his audience and perhaps that of

¹⁷⁹ Jerome, *Epistulae*, Ep. 108. 10 (CSEL 55: 316, 12-16, 18-19): “Infantem pannis involutum vagientem in praesepe, deum magos adorantes, stellam fulgentem desuper, matrem virginem, nutricium sedulum, pastores nocte venientes ... parvulos interfectos, Herodem saevientem, Joseph et Mariam fugientes in Aegyptum”.

¹⁸⁰ Wells, *Image and Response*, 10-12. I have featured this work since it is an interdisciplinary examination which summarises archaeological and anthropological evidence informed by studies from the fields of cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience.

¹⁸¹ Wells, *Image and Response*, 28-9.

¹⁸² M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 29-40, on the Renaissance perception of pictures, at 29. “Everyone, in fact, processes the data from the eye with different equipment”.

¹⁸³ Wells, *Image and Response*, 32.

Prudentius himself would have fed into the way that Prudentius ‘saw’ the martyr images in Italy.¹⁸⁴

All or some of these aspects of viewing could have contributed to forming a complex fusion of perception, experience and memory, leavened by an imaginative poetic talent and informed by the writer’s Christian belief. This coalescence created the substance of Prudentius’ ekphraseis on the martyr paintings. In crafting an ekphrasis any writer’s aim should be, according to the *Progymnasmata*, to ‘place a subject before the audience’s eyes’.¹⁸⁵ Prudentius was thus effectively bringing the images at the tombs before his audience’s eyes in Hispania - translating the visual as understood by him into the textual.

V. ‘Seeing’ the Martyrs in Hispania – Written Text to Visual Experience.

In turn Prudentius’ texts would be translated into the visual by his Hispano-Gallic audience. Prudentius’ own visual experiences had been absorbed into the ekphraseis and from these the audience would construct a visualisation and an emotional response out of their own remembered experiences. They could not reproduce the paintings, however lucid the description might be, but they could dip into their own visual memories to provide mental images that they could relate to.¹⁸⁶ I quote here Michael Baxandall who makes reference to a detailed ekphrasis of a landscape picture seen in Antioch by the fourth-century rhetor Libanius, but points out that in spite of the lucidity of this master of oratory: “we could not reconstruct the picture from his description. Colour sequences, spatial relations, proportions... and other things are lacking. What happens as we read it is surely that out of our memories, our experience of nature and pictures, we construct something ... in our minds”. I also turn, once more, to the words of the ever-perspicacious Quintilian who had succinctly made the same point - “all eloquence is about the activities of life, every

¹⁸⁴ A similar experience could have occurred in respect of Prudentius’ evocation of St. Eulalia’s shrine which could as easily be a description of the kind of elaborate mosaics which we know, for example, existed in Calagurris in his time. See above 189-90.

¹⁸⁵ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 17-19.

¹⁸⁶ M.Baxandall, in *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 1-5.

man applies whatever he hears to his own experience, and the mind finds it easiest to accept what it can recognize".¹⁸⁷

One needs now to consider how these mental images of the martyr paintings might be achieved. It is by no means certain that many members of a Spanish audience would have visited Italy and it seems few Christian works of art existed in Hispania in the late fourth and very early fifth century. One must return to the Christian mosaics at the villa at Centcelles for any evidence that this audience could have had any experience in Hispania of what might be a pictorial commemoration of martyr deaths. The central frieze running round the villa dome is made up of segments containing biblical scenes. One of these shows Nebuchadnezzar condemning Hananiah, Mishael and Azarias, the three Hebrew youths, for failing to worship the golden idol (Daniel 3, 13-20). In another, these three Hebrews are shown burning in a fiery furnace as their punishment (Daniel 3, 21-26). Identified by their Phrygian caps, they stand in flames with their arms raised in orant position, accompanied by the angel who protected them from death.¹⁸⁸ Isla Frez has plausibly posited that this image represented the Bishop Fructuosus, and his two deacons, Augurius and Eulogius, who had been martyred at nearby Tarraco. Like the three Hebrews, Fructuosus and his companions refused to worship false gods and were condemned and burned for their faith.¹⁸⁹ In *Peristephanon VI* Prudentius tells their story, describing the martyrs surrounded by flames lifting their arms in prayer to God, and also compares them to the three who, in olden days, were cast into the fire at Babylon.¹⁹⁰ (The *Acta* of Fructuosus, written earlier, makes the same comparison between the bishop and his two deacons and the three Jews).¹⁹¹ Isla Frez contends that this representation was conceived by the elite owner of Centcelles, perhaps someone close to the ecclesiastical hierarchy himself, as a way of venerating Fructuosus and gaining his protection by showing in the mosaic a close relationship

¹⁸⁷ Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, 445, 8.3.71, 10-12. "Omnis eloquentia circa opera vitae est, ad se refert quisque quae audit, et id facillime accipiunt animi quod agnoscunt" (tr.) Russell, 381; Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 109-10.

¹⁸⁸ Illustration 29, Appendix B.

¹⁸⁹ Isla Frez, 'La Epifanía', 41-2.

¹⁹⁰ *Pe. VI* (CCSL 126: 318, lines 108-111).

¹⁹¹ Musurillo, *Acts*, n.12, *Passio Sanctorum Fructuosi Episcopi, Auguri et Eulogi Diacorum*, 181. As described in this *Acta* the image at Centcelles also includes the figure of the angel beside the three in the fire; Tertullian and Origen also used the three Hebrews as model martyr figures, Grig, *Making Martyrs*, 131 and 181, n.96.

to the three martyrs.¹⁹² Even if Isla Frez' hypothesis is considered unsound, these mosaics would provide Christian mental inspiration for those who viewed them, who would perhaps have been able to identify the Hebrews as models of martyr figures.

We have no way of knowing whether the mosaics at Centcelles were exceptional, but the lack of archaeological evidence for similar Christian artworks elsewhere in Hispania seems to indicate that this was the case. The first and second-century underground burial chambers of Carmona, near Seville, could give a point of reference for some who, while unfamiliar with the Roman catacombs, might know of these indigenous edifices. With steps descending into chambers with painted walls and overhead skylights, they were not dissimilar in structure to the catacombs of Rome.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, like Prudentius, the personal visual record of his Hispanic audience would most likely be based, not on Christian images, but on the art familiar to them from private and public buildings. Prudentius could channel his reactions as a devout Christian who had been in the presence of the Christian holy into his writing. By contrast, his audience, in many cases, would not have had these experiences. Nor frequently did they possess the Christian beliefs or education which would provide the spiritual sustenance necessary to achieve inspirational visualisations. It was, therefore, the 'socially relevant' art, which was still part of elite life in Hispania in the fourth and early fifth centuries, which would have provided the most vivid visual source for them.

Too little remains of painted walls in Hispania to judge what paintings were available to stimulate this audience, but in mosaics we can see dramatic and sometimes violent scenes which might subliminally provide the strongest reference for the mental construction of images of martyr deaths.¹⁹⁴ A mosaic at Complutum,

¹⁹² Isla Frez, 'La Epifanía', 49. The highest frieze at Centcelles may contain the image of a bishop on his *cathedra*, rather than the *dominus*, which would provide further evidence of the Fructuosus connection.

¹⁹³ M. Bendala Galán, *La necrópolis romana de Carmona, (Sevilla)*, I and II (Sevilla: Diputación Provincial, 1976). The Tumba del Banquete Funerario showed a banquet group eating while servants brought them food. Fig.LXX. 93-4,I. The Tumba de Servilia contained the portrait of a woman, Fig.XLI, 96-8, I. Other tombs were decorated with garlands, flowers and birds; although located in neighbouring Southern Gaul, a tomb found at the site of Saint-Seurin in Bordeaux contained marine painted images dated to the fourth century. A. Barbet, 'Peinture murale romaine à Bordeaux', in *Peinture Murale en Gaule: actes des séminaires AFPMA 1982-3* (Oxford: BAR. Int. Ser. 240 (1985), 89-119.

¹⁹⁴ Webb quotes Augustine (from his *De trinitate* 8.6.68-9) as employing the same technique to visualize the unseen. He drew on his knowledge of Carthage to try to imagine Alexandria which he had never visited, *Ekphrasis*, 121-2.

for instance, shows the armed and helmeted Achilles violently dragging the Amazon queen, Penthesilea, from her horse before killing her.¹⁹⁵ At the great villa of La Olmeda, as noted above, Achilles appears again in a scene set on Skyros. In a single expository tableau he is seen seizing the weapons of the soldiers who have come to take him, while on one side the daughters of Lykomedes try to restrain him, and on the other a soldier sounds his trumpet as Odysseus urges Achilles to Troy.¹⁹⁶ The other remarkable mosaic at La Olmeda also shows an action scene, but this violently depicts a hunt, containing images of man and animal attacked and slaughtered amid trees and rocky outcrops.¹⁹⁷ There are further scenes of brutality at Carranque where Adonis battles to the death with a wild boar while Mars and Venus look on, and at Cabezon de Pisuerga Homeric warriors do battle, while the theme of Theseus killing the Minotaur is well-represented in other mosaics across the peninsula.¹⁹⁸ Depictions of spirited horses urged on by charioteers evoke those beasts which played their part in *Peristephanon* XI, and appear in mosaics in Mérida and Barcelona.¹⁹⁹ These images are all from sites in Hispania probably dated to the fourth-century.²⁰⁰ Statues of the gods also remained in the villas, such as the iconic programmes displaying the exploits of Apollo, found at Valdetorres de Jarama, and the cultic figures associated with Bacchus at El Ruedo.²⁰¹ Neither can we ignore the scenes of the deities' activities which appeared on earlier pagan sarcophagi; in particular that depicting the death of the mythical Hippolytus found at Tarraco is apposite. The image of the youth smashed and helpless beneath the feet of rearing horses encapsulates visually the moment when Saint Hippolytus himself met the same fate.²⁰²

¹⁹⁵ Fernández-Galiano, *Complutum*, 14-89, Fig.46: The site of this mosaic has, in fact, more recently been reinterpreted as a funerary space by S. Rascón, A. Sánchez, 'Computum, el Campo Laudable *Qala't Abd al-Salam* y el Burgo de Santiuste. Centros urbanos y suburbios de Alcalá de Henares en la Antigüedad y la Edad Media', in D. Vaquerizo (ed.), *Las Áreas Suburbanas en la ciudad histórica: Topografía, usos, función* (Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 2010), 335-362, 345-7.

¹⁹⁶ Illustration 2, Appendix B; Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, 153-4, fig.161.

¹⁹⁷ Illustration 4, Appendix B; Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, 153, fig.160.

¹⁹⁸ Fernández-Galiano, *Carranque*, 87-9; Theseus, for example in Blázquez, *Córdoba, Jaén y Málaga*, CME III, no.24, Blázquez, Mezquíriz, *Navarra*, CME VII, no.39 and Blázquez, *Mosaicos romanos de España*, 286-9; Neira, Mañanes, *Valladolid*, CME XI, 'El mosaico de los guerreros', fig.35.

¹⁹⁹ Gómez Pallerès, 'Inscripciones musivas' for the mosaic of the Mérida 'aurigae', fig 7; Beltrán, *From Barcino*, 39, Fig.10.

²⁰⁰ Beyond Hispania, in Southern Gaul, where Prudentius was known to be popular, there is a mosaic from Nîmes depicting the shattered body of Hector dragged behind two horses past the walls of Troy, which, in a remarkable fashion, echoes the image of the dying Hippolytus, Lancha, *Mosaïques*, fig.49.

²⁰¹ Vaquerizo Gil, Carrillo Diaz-Pines, 'El Ruedo'; Puerta, et al., 'La colección de esculturas'.

²⁰² Illustration 13, Appendix B.

These are but a few examples, and there would have been many more, which can give an indication of the kind of imagery which might inform the emotions and imagination of Prudentius' audience. The actuality of Christian iconography, as exemplified at Centcelles, provided a context in which Prudentius could feel able to present his ekphraseis of Christian imagery to a Spanish audience. Nevertheless, powerful 'pagan' images were part of the lives of the elite members of society to whom Prudentius addressed his poetry - probably far more so than the embryonic Christian art forms. It was this non-Christian art, which Prudentius' audience knew so well, which could help them to construct mental images and 'see' the Christian art described by Prudentius. If harnessed correctly, the power of 'pagan' art, which Prudentius so feared, could be put to use in arousing and strengthening the Christian belief of his audience. The pagan images could thus become 'clean' by functioning as an aid to Christian understanding.²⁰³

²⁰³ As 'proposed' by Theodosius in *CS.I* (CCSL 126: 203, line 502): "Consistere puras".

CONCLUSION

Written in heaven are the names of two martyrs. Christ has entered them there in letters of gold, while on earth he has recorded them in letters of blood. For this glory the land of Spain has the fortune to be held in honour through all the world.

Peristephanon I: Emeterius and Chelidonius.¹

This thesis was set in motion by my reading two poems by Prudentius which contained ekphraseis of wall paintings illustrating the *passiones* of the martyrs Cassian and Hippolytus at their shrines in Italy. Prudentius' emotional experiences at the tombs and the paintings' inspirational effect on him prompted me to examine the poems' historical context and the background of this Hispano-Roman Christian author, writing at a time when ideas about the representations of martyrs in art and literature were still in their infancy and visual culture in Hispania was still dominated by non-Christian imagery. The poems were included in his *Peristephanon*: a collection of fourteen poems celebrating the lives and deaths of martyrs. Prudentius' dedication to his Christian belief, to martyr veneration and to his country is encapsulated by the words, quoted above, honouring the saints Emeterius and Chelidonius who were martyred in Prudentius' Spanish home town of Calagurris (Calahorra). This patriotic praise of Spanish martyrs substantiates my proposal that the poet initially directed his work to an audience located in Hispania, especially since thirty-eight Spanish saints in total are celebrated within six of the *Peristephanon* poems. In the same way that Prudentius' poetry emphasized his Spanish roots, I have followed suit in emphasizing this Spanish background. My aim in writing this thesis has therefore been to place the collection of martyr poems within the fabric of Prudentius' life and times and that of his audience in Hispania during the later fourth and early fifth centuries.

My approach has differed from other scholarly work connected with this poet for, in fulfilling this intention, I have utilised evidence from contemporaneous material remains in his homeland as well as from relevant texts. I have in particular cited the visual culture of Hispania, also using it as a cross-reference to the Christian imagery

¹ *Pe.* I (CCSL 126: 251, lines 1-4) (tr.) Thomson, 99.

Prudentius witnessed at the Italian shrines. I differ from most Prudentian scholars who continue to neglect to relate the visual in Prudentius' poems to his environment in Hispania.² In my research I have, wherever possible, favoured information stemming from the region around his home town, Calagurris, and the Ebro river valley in which it stands. Although my focus has been on Hispania, I have touched on events, people and places in Southern Gaul, since Prudentius' poetry is known to have acquired an audience there soon after his death.³ However, it has not been within the intended scope of the thesis to detail the comparable circumstances which existed in Southern Gaul during the poet's lifetime. I have also commented on the archaeological record of holy places in Italy where the tombs of Cassian and Hippolytus were located.

I emphasize the use of the word contemporaneous in the above paragraph, as I have avoided sources dating to the period after Prudentius' demise. We are aware from the preface to the collection of his poems that Prudentius was writing this *Praefatio* c.404/5AD, and therefore his poems represent the world as he viewed it up to that time. Prudentius himself was a fervent Christian, but at the very beginning of the fifth century, the religion he followed was not yet secured in the hearts and minds of many of the inhabitants of Hispania. Although the Spanish Emperor Theodosius' Constantinopolitan Court appeared to stand for Christian piety, in particular Nicene orthodoxy, as discussed in Chapter One, it is not at all clear to what extent the Spanish at home were bound to Christianity, orthodox or otherwise. Prudentius could hope that Catholic Christian belief would take root amongst the people of the Iberian Peninsula, but he had no crystal ball which would enable him to foresee its ultimate successful establishment there.

Throughout the poet's work we are made aware of Prudentius' fears over the potential revival of 'pagan' rituals and traditions and the more subtle menace of incorrect Christian belief. His poetry was intended to combat these dangers.

² This is typified most recently (2011) by the illustration on the cover of *The Origin of Sin*, Malamud's translation of the *Hamartigenia*, which shows an image of Adam and Eve from the fourth-century sarcophagus of the Roman aristocrat Junius Bassus. The use of this overlooks the existence of the same image on the fourth-century *Receptio Animae* sarcophagus, albeit a Roman import, found in Zaragoza (and at other Spanish sites).

³ The first extant mention of the poet is in the Gallic Chronicle of 452. The author was apparently located in the "Seven Provinces" (roughly South and Southeastern Gaul). S. Muhlberger, *The Fifth-Century Chroniclers: Prosper, Hydatius and the Gallic Chronicler of 452* (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1990), 179-180.

Nevertheless he was not a churchman. Unlike them he did not have a readymade, albeit sometimes reluctant, Christian audience for his works. Prudentius was a lay figure who had to work hard to provide the kind of literary tours-de-force which would catch the attention of an audience who must often have been indifferent to the Christian aspects of his verses. I have suggested that since in content and style his poetry is rich in references to the classical and literary tradition, the educated aristocracy of Hispania would have best appreciated his words and thus have formed the basis of his audience.

Material evidence which I appraised in Chapter Two shows that the fourth century in Hispania was a period of a flourishing villa culture. These residences seem to have been supported by a healthy rural economy, exemplified by the wine-producing villas in Prudentius' neighbourhood around Calagurris. Some of the villas were like La Olmeda – impressively built to stand out in the landscape; every floor covered with complex mosaics; baths for the wellbeing of the *dominus* and his guests. Others were smaller and less grand such as that at Els Ametllers, which nonetheless possessed a welcoming mosaic from its owner Vitalis. The audience whom Prudentius entertained with his verses would have occupied these various houses and therefore I have suggested it is apposite to describe him as a 'villa-poet' to the elite. We have no way of knowing how the church hierarchy viewed this 'amateur' theologian, not directly subject to their diktats, although Prudentius seemed to have been close to his local bishop, Valerianus. I consider that Prudentius is likely, at the time of writing, to have led a more modest, possibly ascetic, life than the aristocrats of his audience. His poetry, however, may have provided a socially and intellectually acceptable Christian alternative to the words of the ecclesiastical brethren.

In assessing the religious attachments of the Spanish in the late fourth and early fifth centuries in Chapter Two, I have examined physical evidence from rural and urban sites in Hispania. These give little concrete indication of committed Christian devotees among Prudentius' fellow countrymen. Churches do not appear in urban areas until the later fifth century and there is little positive evidence for places of Christian worship at villa sites until the sixth. While Spanish Christians seem to have gathered at one another's homes to pray and praise their God, there is material and textual evidence that concurrently there were others in Hispania still participating in rituals associated with indigenous deities. Elaborate sarcophagi with Christian

themes began to be shipped from Rome in the first half of the fourth century, but these may tell us more about cultural and social influences being communicated between the elite of the Empire than about their religious affinities. Church Councils in Hispania of the period meanwhile, most notably those involving the ‘heresy’ of Priscillianism, detail the preoccupations of the clergy and do not necessarily inform on the beliefs of the mass of Spanish people.

Similarly as discussed in Chapter Three, the physical evidence for the martyr cults which were becoming popular in the East of the Empire and in Italy, promoted by Church fathers like Ambrose and Damasus, is not manifested with any certainty in the archaeological record of Hispania from the fourth century. It has been argued inconclusively that a handful of rural mausolea might have had a martyrial function, and the cemeteries outside of the cities have been scoured by excavators for evidence of early martyrial edifices. However, again, it is not until the mid-fifth century that there is more reliable evidence for the building of shrines, such as those of the saints Eulalia and Fructuosus in Mérida and Tarragona respectively. With this in mind it becomes difficult to see Prudentius’ enthusiastic reports of martyr worship in Hispania during his lifetime as being accurate representations of the truth. Scholars, nevertheless, turn with regularity to Prudentius’ six poems on Hispano-Gallic saints for proof of an early following for their cults.⁴ This, in spite of the fact that we should question whether the role of the poet in creating epic stories of the torment endured by the martyrs was causal rather than consequential in the promotion of their worship.

We also have to take Prudentius’ word in his poem to Saint Lawrence that his Christian community knew of and desired to visit the sacred tombs of Rome. It does, however, seem likely that the poet himself did make a pilgrimage to Italy, as in his poems to Cassian and Hippolytus, analysed in Chapter Four, Prudentius makes it clear that he has been present at the tombs of these martyrs. They are significant in that these are the only martyr poems where he places himself physically within the written text. In them Prudentius delineates the epiphanic emotional and spiritual connection to the saints which he felt on witnessing paintings of their suffering and death which were portrayed on the walls of their respective shrines. The accuracy of

⁴ For example, Castillo Maldonado, *Los mártires*, 108.

the poet's vivid ekphraseis of these martyr pictures has been subjected to doubt but I have identified images and physical spaces existing during the late fourth and early fifth century which seem to corroborate the descriptive passages of the poet. Prudentius' perception of the power of art is reflected in his verses, in particular a telling line from *Peristephanon* X which states that "art has been effective in propagating wrong beliefs".⁵ Although this is a comment on the malign effect of 'pagan' imagery, Prudentius, as has been seen from his response to the paintings at Cassian's and Hippolytus' tombs, approved the use of pictorial images to inspire devotion in the Christian cause. This is confirmed by his work, the *Tituli Historiarum*, which comprises a collection of short poems intended for use as titles to the display of instructive Christian illustrations of episodes from the Old and New Testament.

The visual culture of Hispania was, however, at the time of Prudentius' writing still predominately non-Christian in its content, as I have detailed in Chapter Five. The villas and urban *domus* of Hispania contained a colourful feast of mosaics, many of which depicted myths of the 'pagan' deities and their associates. These may have been no more than symbols of *paideia* which acknowledged the shared culture of the elite, in the same way that mosaics of the hunt and the circus, which were also popular decorative schemes, demonstrated their traditional pastimes. Nevertheless, the myths depicted in the mosaics, and also in sculptural features, were precisely the kind of stories which Prudentius condemned in poems such as *Contra Symmachum* I and II and *Peristephanon* X. Even though sarcophagi illustrated with Christian themes had been known in Hispania since the early fourth century, these funerary artworks (with the notable exception of biblical mosaics at Centcelles) seem to have formed the limits of the Christian visual culture which most of Prudentius' audience might have experienced. I have therefore suggested that while the Spanish elite may have known little of Christian art, in trying to mentally process the images described by Prudentius of the dying martyrs Cassian and Hippolytus, their imaginative response could be fuelled by the 'pagan' images which continued to provide a physical backdrop in their lives. By studying the material culture of late fourth and early fifth-century Hispania we too can perceive the kind of image which might have

⁵ *Pe.* X (CCSL 126: 339, line 271).

fed into the mental processes of Prudentius' audience and enabled them to 'view' the Christian subject-matter he described.

At the start of this thesis I discussed the *Epilogus* written by Prudentius which was the final poem in his collected works. It revealed an elderly man, contemplating death, who hoped that his words would serve his God, and that his *trochees* would be the means of his salvation. I now close with an epilogue for Prudentius - but one more positive in its content than his own. His poem for Emeterius and Chelidonius, *Peristephanon* I, can act as a vehicle to show that Prudentius was indeed able to serve the Christian religion beyond the environs of Calagurris in the years after his death. The aristocrat and consul Mavortius read this poem, the first written mention of these martyrs, in his own copy of Prudentius' poems in Northern Italy around 527AD.⁶ Later in the same century the prominent bishop and author Gregory of Tours included the saints' story in his work *De gloria martyrum*, referencing Prudentius' name and quoting directly from the poem. At the beginning of the seventh century Isidore of Seville praised Prudentius' poetry and ensured that words from *Peristephanon* I were employed, together with those from other Prudentian poems, for liturgical purposes in the Spanish church – Prudentius being the only non-cleric to achieve this honour. My 'epilogue', therefore, shows that with his verses Prudentius was ultimately successful in being able to be of service to his God. Prudentius' Christian legacy was his significance in the spread of his faith in the Post-Roman world.

Nevertheless, it has been supposed that Prudentius' poetry provides corroboration that during his lifetime many Spanish themselves were actively committed to Christian beliefs. In this thesis I have aimed to contextualise this poetry and Prudentius' role as a villa-poet within the social, the political, and the religious networks of his Hispania. Although, in this process, I have referenced the written work of Prudentius' contemporaries, I have uniquely accessed physical, particularly visual, evidence. My findings have led me to doubt the truth of those suppositions regarding Spanish piety: the combination of literary, artistic and archaeological evidence points to the conclusion that, from Prudentius' perspective,

⁶ Codex Parisinus latinus 8084, known as the Puteanus, contains *Cath.*, *Apoth.*, *Ham.*, *Psych.* and *Pe.* 1-V.142. In this MSS *Peristephanon* I is entitled 'hymnus in honorem Sanctorum Martyrum Emeterii et Chelidonii Calagurritanorum' emphasising acknowledgement of the poem's roots, (and in an echo of Prudentius' own word the poem is glossed 'trochaic').

his poetizing of how God and his martyrs might be worshipped would have provided a much-needed element in the drive to preserve and advance Christianity in his homeland and beyond.

APPENDIX A

Myths in Prudentius' poems and Spanish Mosaics.

This exercise has its limitations in that the table below largely refers to the actual appearance in mosaics in Hispania of mythic figures cited by Prudentius. These are extant mosaics or those known but now destroyed. There are other mosaics in Hispania which show scenes from myths which involve 'pagan' deities (as defined by Prudentius) but do not depict the deity himself or herself. This appendix, however, is significant as it shows the ubiquity in Hispania of visual images of those deities which Prudentius has referenced in his poetry.

Mythic Figures in Prudentius	Reference in Prudentius	Location of the Mosaic in Hispania	Reference in Secondary Source
Muses, (Camena)	Cath.III. 26. Cath.IX.3. CS.II.54.	Arellano Montemayor,Córdoba Torre de Palma Itálica (2) Moncada, Valencia Mérida Torralba	CME VII. Pl. 50 CME III. 56 MRE. 283-286 CME II. 53, 55 MRE. 412 La.213-8,105 La.163, 81b
Eros (Amor)	Ps.436	Complutum(2) Córdoba, (2) Fernan Nuñez, Córdoba Fortunatus, Fraga(2) Mérida Itálica Zaragoza	CME IX.Pl.14-5 CME III. Pl.9,83 CME III. 39 CC. 215, 216, Pls.39, 40 MRE. 420 La. 195-6, 93 CC. 198, Pl.22
Adonis	Pe. X. 228	Carranque Arcos de la Frontera	F-Galiano, 89 CME IV. Pl.17

Apollo	Apoth.402, 455 CS.I. 262, 626. CS.II.492, 563. Pe.III. 76, 193.	Santisteban de Puerto Elche(Algoros) Torre de Palma Cadiz Barcelona Itálica	CME IV. Pl.91 CME IX. Pl. 41. MRE. 292 MRE. 392 MRE. 434 CME II. Pl. 50
Attis and Cybele	CS.I. 183 CS.II, 52,52 Pe.III,196	Barcelona Arellano	MRE.434 Mezquíriz, 232-3
Bacchus	CS.I.122, 183,226 CS.II.496, 851 Pe. X.274, 280	Córdoba Córdoba Alcolea, Córdoba Cabra,Córdoba Ecija,Seville Carabanchal, Madrid. Termancia(Tiermes)Soria Liedena,Navarra Complutum Complutum Zaragoza Itálica Itálica Itálica Itálica Itálica Itálica Itálica Itálica,(part)(Maenad) Baños de Valdearados Torre de Palma Mérida Puente Genil Andelos Torre Albarragena Centeno	CME III. Fig.8 CME III. Pl. 13 CME III. Pl. 85 CME III. Fig 32 CME IV. Pl. 38 CME V. 53-4 CME VI. 50 CME VII. Pl. 28 CME IX. 14 CME IX. Pl.33 CME IX.Pl. 48 CME II. Pl. 8-10 CME II. 11-13 CME II. Pl. 37 CME II. Pl. 42 CME II. Pl. 44-5 CME II. Pl. 50 CME IX. Pl.20 CME XII.Pl. 31 MRE. 276 CME I. Pl.26 La. 209, 103 La. 247 La. 247 La. 247

Pan	Pe. X. 242	Hellin Torre de Palma Zaragoza	CME VIII. PL36 MRE.276 CC. 198, Pl.22
Jupiter	Apoth. 413 CS.I.27,60,85,87,183,250 CS.I. 275, 292,579,609 CS.II.492,686,851 Pe.II.12,465 Pe. X. 201, 215,234,272, 415.	Complutum Complutum, as a swan La Malena Itálica Itálica,(as an eagle) Itálica,(The loves of Jupiter) Fernan Nuñez,(as a bull) Quintanilla de la Cuerza, (as a swan)	CME IX. P14 MRE. 399 MRE. 437-44 MRE. 424 CME II. 14 CME II.1 CME III. Pl. 39c MRE.400
Juno	Apoth. 189, 455 CS.I. 183,251,292 CS.II. 497,869 Pe.X. 287	Casariche,Seville La Malena	MRE. 421 MRE. 437-44
Mercury	Apoth.412 CS.I.86-7 CS.II. 520	Hellin Itálica Torre de Palma La Malena Casariche, Seville	CME VIII. Pl.38 MRE. 424 MRE. 293 MRE. 437-44 MRE. 421
Minerva	Apoth.455 CS.I.183 CS.II. 221,492,545,911 PE.X. 275	Córdoba Province Complutum Casariche, Seville Carranque Torre de Bell-Lloc La Malena	CME III. Pl. 43 MRE. 397 MRE. 421 MRE. 431 MRE. 434 MRE. 438
Mars	CS.I. 283,626 CS. II.495,686 Pe.X. 611	Itálica Torre de Bell-Lloc Carranque	MRE. 424 MRE. 434 F-Galiano, 89

Hercules	Apoth. 455. Ham. 402 CS.I.116, 226 Pe.X.215 PE.X.884 PE.X.283	Carranque(2) Itálica Cartama, Málaga Liria, Valencia Torre de Palma(2) Barcelona	F-Galiano, 85-6 MRE. 394 CME III.Pl. 92-5 CME IX.Pl.42-5 MRE. 291,293 MRE. 434
Diana	Apoth.455 CS.I.369 CS.II.53, 495 Pe.X.281	Cabriana,(Comunion) Santisteban del Puerto Carranque Villa del Prado, Vallad. Villabermudo, Palencia Hellin	CME V. Pl.41 CME III.Pl.59 La.82,Pl. LXXII MRE. 423 MRE. 423 CME VIII.Pl.38
Saturn	CS.I.42,233,626 CS.II.296,851 Pe.II. 449	Itálica Itálica	MRE. 416 MRE. 424
Venus	Apoth.189 CS.I. 166,183,221,266 CS.I. 283,292 CS.II. 494,535,555,563 Pe.III.76 Pe. X. 230,256	Cartama Arcos de la Frontera Quintilla,Lorca Hellin Itálica Itálica Itálica Itálica Tarragona Mérida Fortunatus, Fraga Casariche La Malena	CME III. Pl.70-1 CME IV. Pl.17 CME IV.fig. 21 CME VIII.Pl.37 MRE. 415-6 MRE. 418 MRE. 419-20 MRE. 424 MRE. 420 MRE. 420 CC. 215, 39 MRE. 421 MRE. 437-44
Flora	CS.I. 266 CS.II.563	Carmona	CME IV. PL 16
Neptune	CS.I. 310	Itálica Mérida Sabadell Quintinilla de la Cuerza	MRE. 412 CME I. Pls. 8,9 MRE.413 MRE.413

APPENDIX B

ILLUSTRATIONS

(All photographs are by the author with the exception of numbers 1, 2 and 3).

1. 'Medusa Head' ornament, Vareia, late Fourth Century. Logroño Museum. (Photograph: Espinosa and Castellanos, *Comunidades locales*).
2. Mosaic: Achilles on Skyros, La Olmeda Villa, late Fourth Century. Pedrosa de la Vega, Palencia. (Photograph: www.villaromanalaolmeda.com).
3. Mosaic: Achilles on Skyros and Hunt Scene, La Olmeda Villa, Fourth Century. Pedrosa de la Vega, Palencia. (Photograph: www.villaromanalaolmeda.com).
4. Mosaic: Hunt Scene (detail), La Olmeda Villa, late Fourth Century. Pedrosa de la Vega, Palencia.
5. Mosaic: 'Vitalis', Els Ametllers Villa, late Fourth Century. Municipal Museum, Tossa de Mar.
6. Mosaic: FORTU...NATUS, Villa Fortunatus, Fraga, late Fourth Century. Museo de Zaragoza.
7. Mosaic: Leda and the Swan, Complutum, late Fourth Century. Archaeological Museum, Alcalá de Henares.
8. Inscription to Lacubegis on a Bull's head Altar from Ujue, Fourth Century. Museo de Navarra, Pamplona.
9. Bull's head Altar from Ujue, Fourth Century. Museo de Navarra, Pamplona.
10. Mosaic: Jonah, Centcelles Villa, late Fourth Century. Centcelles Villa, near Tarragona.
11. Sarcophagus (*Receptio Animae*), c.330AD. Church of St. Engracia, Zaragoza.
12. Sarcophagus (*Trilogia Petrina*), 340-350AD. Church of St. Engracia, Zaragoza.
13. 'Hippolytus' Sarcophagus, Second Century. Museu Nacional Arqueològic de Tarragona.
14. Column depicting the Martyrdom of Achilleus, Fourth Century. Catacomb of Domitilla, Rome.
15. *Confessio* fresco, Roman *domus*, Fourth Century. SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Rome.
16. Wall-painting of 'Women at Christ's tomb', from Dura Europos baptistery, Syria, Third Century. Yale University Art Gallery.
17. Mosaic: Hunt Scene, Centcelles Villa, late Fourth Century. Centcelles Villa, near Tarragona.

18. Mosaic: Triumph of Bacchus, Zaragoza, Second/Third Century. Museo de Zaragoza.
19. Mosaic: Bacchus *Thiasos* Scene, Complutum, late Fourth Century. Archaeological Museum, Alcalá de Henares.
20. Mosaic: Estada Villa, Fourth /early Fifth Century. Museo de Zaragoza.
21. Demeter/Ceres Sculpture, La Malena Villa, Fourth Century. Museo de Zaragoza.
22. Attis Sculpture, Villa Fortunatus, Fraga, Fourth Century. Museo de Zaragoza (reproduction).
23. Wall-Painting: Diana, Calagurris, Second Century. Calahorra Municipal Museum.
24. Mosaic: *Domus*, Calagurris, Fourth Century. Calahorra Municipal Museum.
25. 'Orestes' Sarcophagus, Second Century. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.
26. Mosaic: Eros and Psyche, Villa Fortunatus, Fraga, Fourth Century. Museo de Zaragoza.
27. Mosaic: Venus and Cupid, Villa Fortunatus, Fraga, Fourth Century. Museo de Zaragoza.
28. Mosaic: 'House of the Judgement of Paris', Zaragoza, Third/Fourth Century. Museo de Zaragoza.
29. Mosaic: Three Hebrews in the Fire, Centcelles Villa, late Fourth Century. Centcelles Villa, near Tarragona.



1. 'Medusa Head' Ornament, Vareia,

Late Fourth Century,

Logroño Museum.

(Photograph: Espinosa and Castellanos, *Comunidades locales*).



2. Mosaic: Achilles on Skyros, La Olmeda Villa,

Late Fourth Century.

Pedrosa de la Vega, Palencia.

(Photograph: www.villaromanalaolmeda.com accessed on 29/9/12).



3. Mosaic: Achilles on Skyros and Hunt Scene, La Olmeda Villa,

Late Fourth Century.

Pedrosa de la Vega, Palencia.

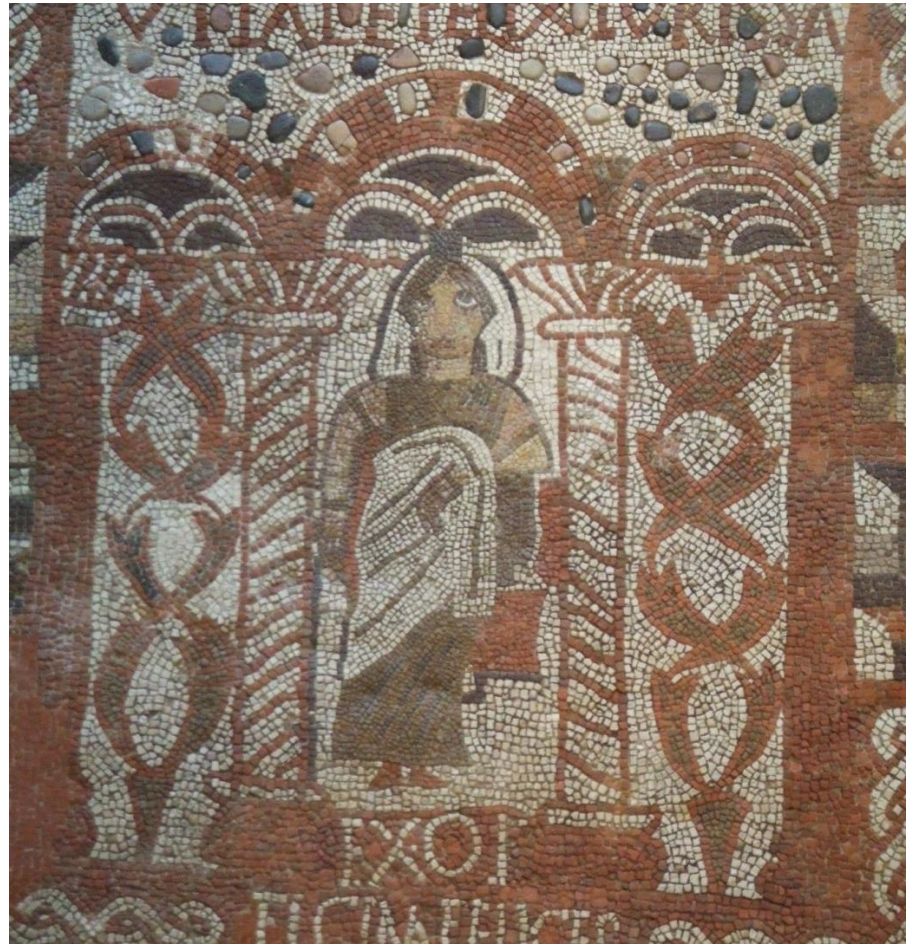
(Photograph: www.villaromanalaolmeda.com accessed on 29/9/12).



4. Mosaic: Hunt Scene (detail), La Olmeda Villa,

Late Fourth Century.

Pedrosa de la Vega, Palencia.



5. Mosaic: 'Vitalis', Els Ametllers Villa,

Late Fourth Century.

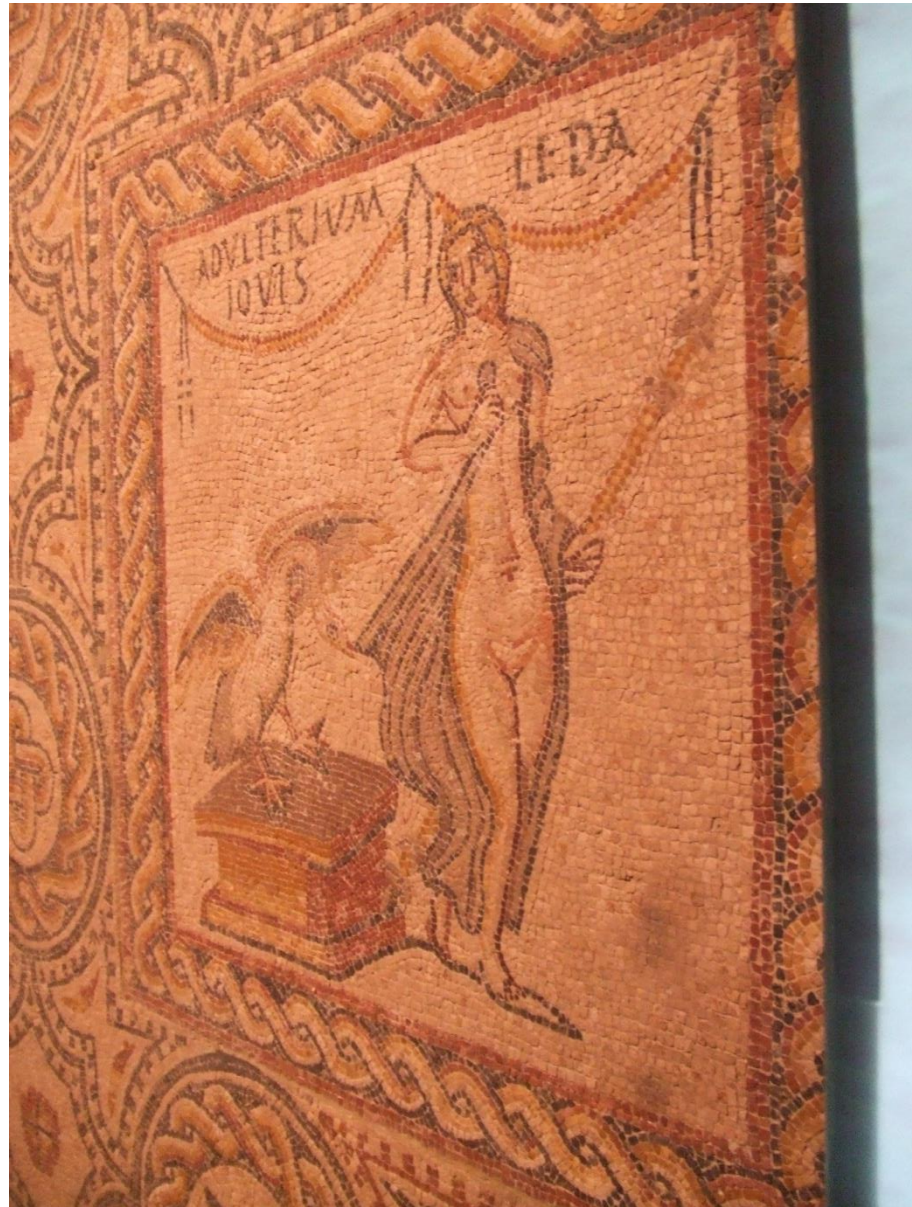
Municipal Museum, Tossa de Mar,



6. Mosaic: FORTU...NATUS, Villa Fortunatus, Fraga,

Late Fourth Century.

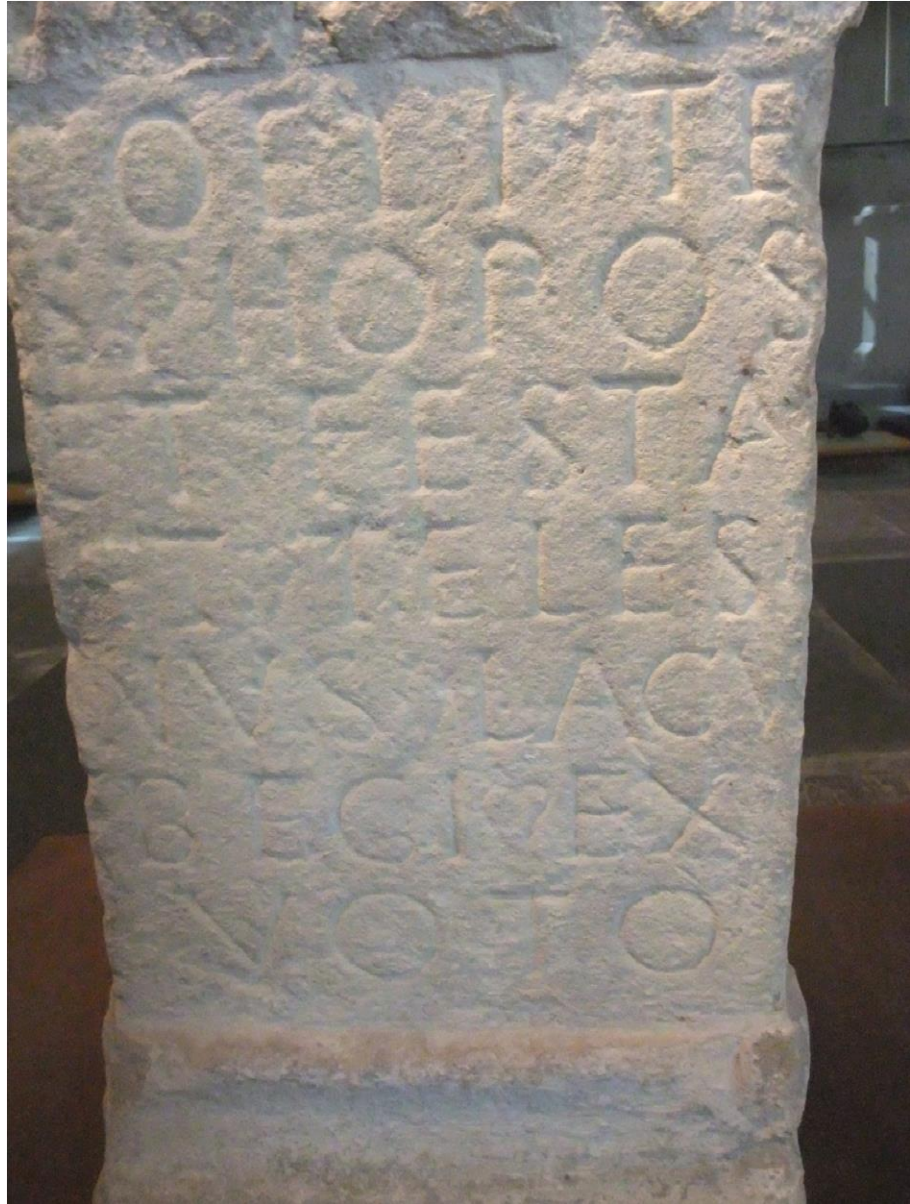
Museo de Zaragoza.



7. Mosaic: Leda and the Swan, Complutum,

Fourth Century.

Archaeological Museum, Alcalá de Henares.



8. Inscription to Lacubegis on a Bull's Head Altar from Ujue,

Fourth Century.

Museo de Navarra, Pamplona.



9. Bull's Head Altar from Ujue,

Fourth Century.

Museo de Navarra, Pamplona.



10. Mosaic: Jonah,

Late Fourth Century.

Centcelles Villa, near Tarragona.



11. Sarcophagus (*Receptio Animae*),

c.330 AD.

Church of Saint Engracia, Zaragoza.



12. Sarcophagus (*Trilogia Petrina*),

340-350 AD.

Church of Saint Engracia, Zaragoza.



13. 'Hippolytus' Sarcophagus,

Second Century.

Museu Nacional Arqueològic de Tarragona.



14. Column depicting the Martyrdom of Achilles,

Fourth Century.

Catacomb of Domitilla, Rome.



15. *Confessio* fresco, Roman *domus*,

Fourth Century.

SS. Giovanni e Paolo, Rome.



16. Wall-Painting of the 'Women at Christ's tomb',
Dura Europos baptistery, Syria, Third Century.
Yale University Art Gallery.



17. Mosaic: Hunt Scene,

Late Fourth Century.

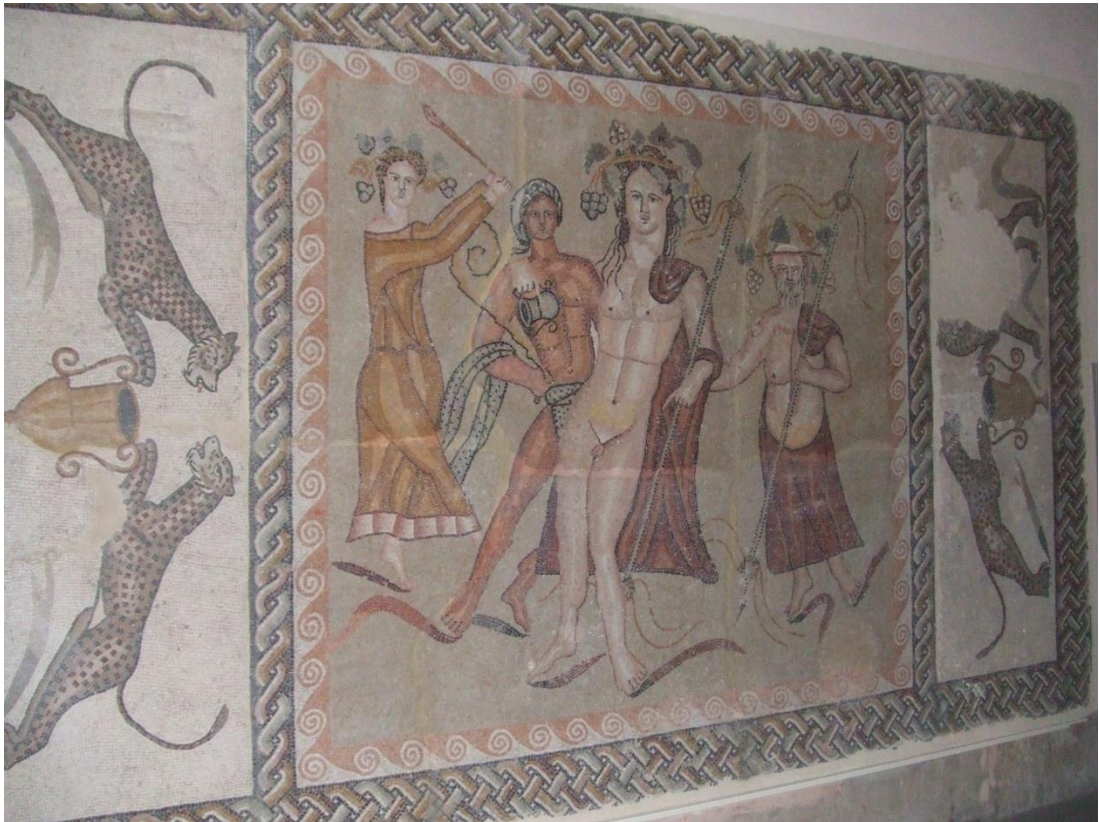
Centcelles Villa, near Tarragona.



18. Mosaic: Triumph of Bacchus, Zaragoza,

Second Century.

Museo de Zaragoza.



19. Mosaic: Bacchus *Thiasos* Scene, Complutum,

Late Fourth Century.

Archaeological Museum, Alcalá de Henares,



20. Mosaic: Estada Villa, Fourth/Early Fifth Century.

Museo de Zaragoza.



21. Demeter/Ceres Sculpture, La Malena Villa,

Fourth Century.

Museo de Zaragoza.



22. Attis sculpture, Villa Fortunatus, Fraga,

Fourth Century.

Museo de Zaragoza (reproduction).



23. Wall-Painting of Diana, Calagurris,

Second Century.

Calahorra Municipal Museum.



24. Mosaic: *Domus*, Calagurris,

Fourth Century.

Calahorra Municipal Museum.



25. 'Orestes' Sarcophagus,

Second Century.

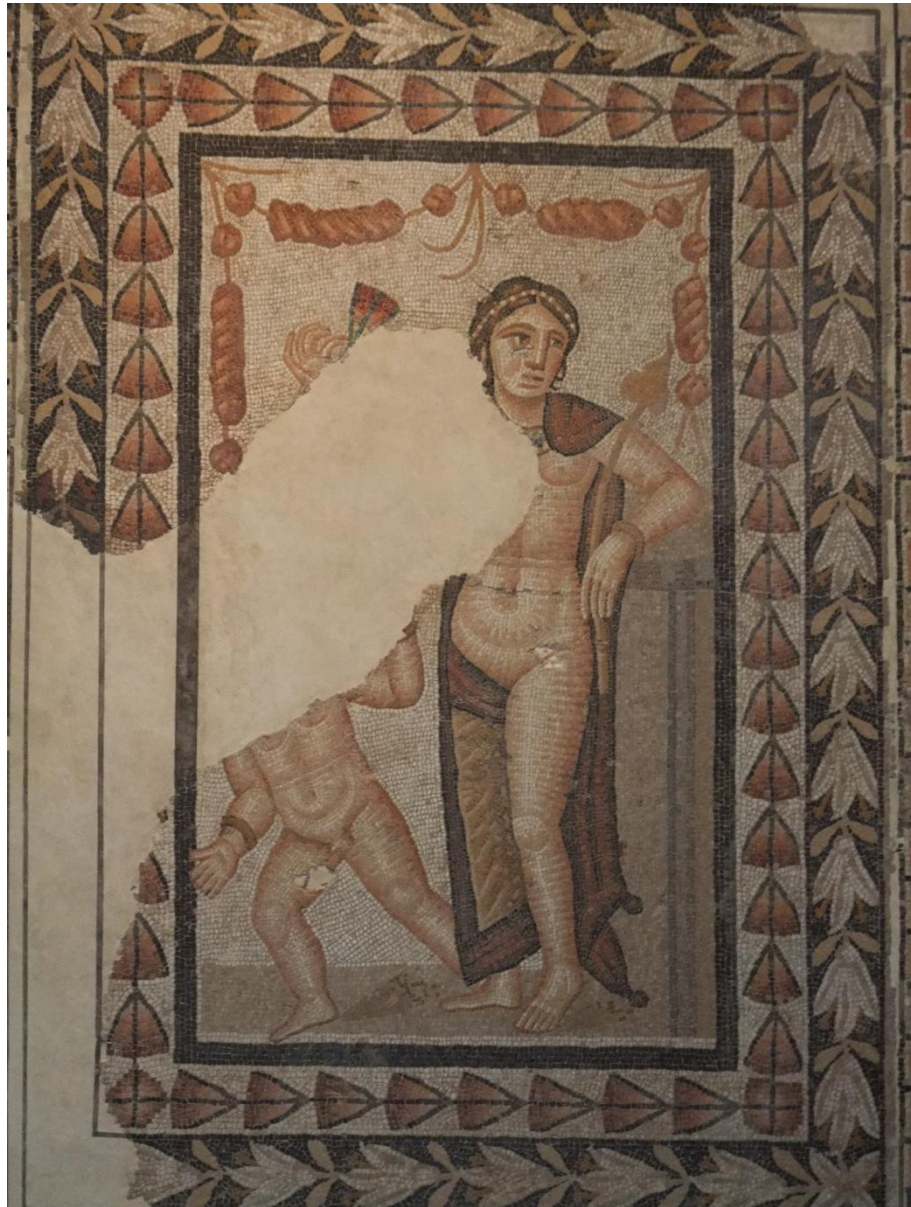
Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.



26. Mosaic: Eros and Psyche, Villa Fortunatus, Fraga,

Fourth Century.

Museo de Zaragoza.



27. Mosaic: Venus and Cupid, Villa Fortunatus, Fraga,

Fourth Century.

Museo de Zaragoza.



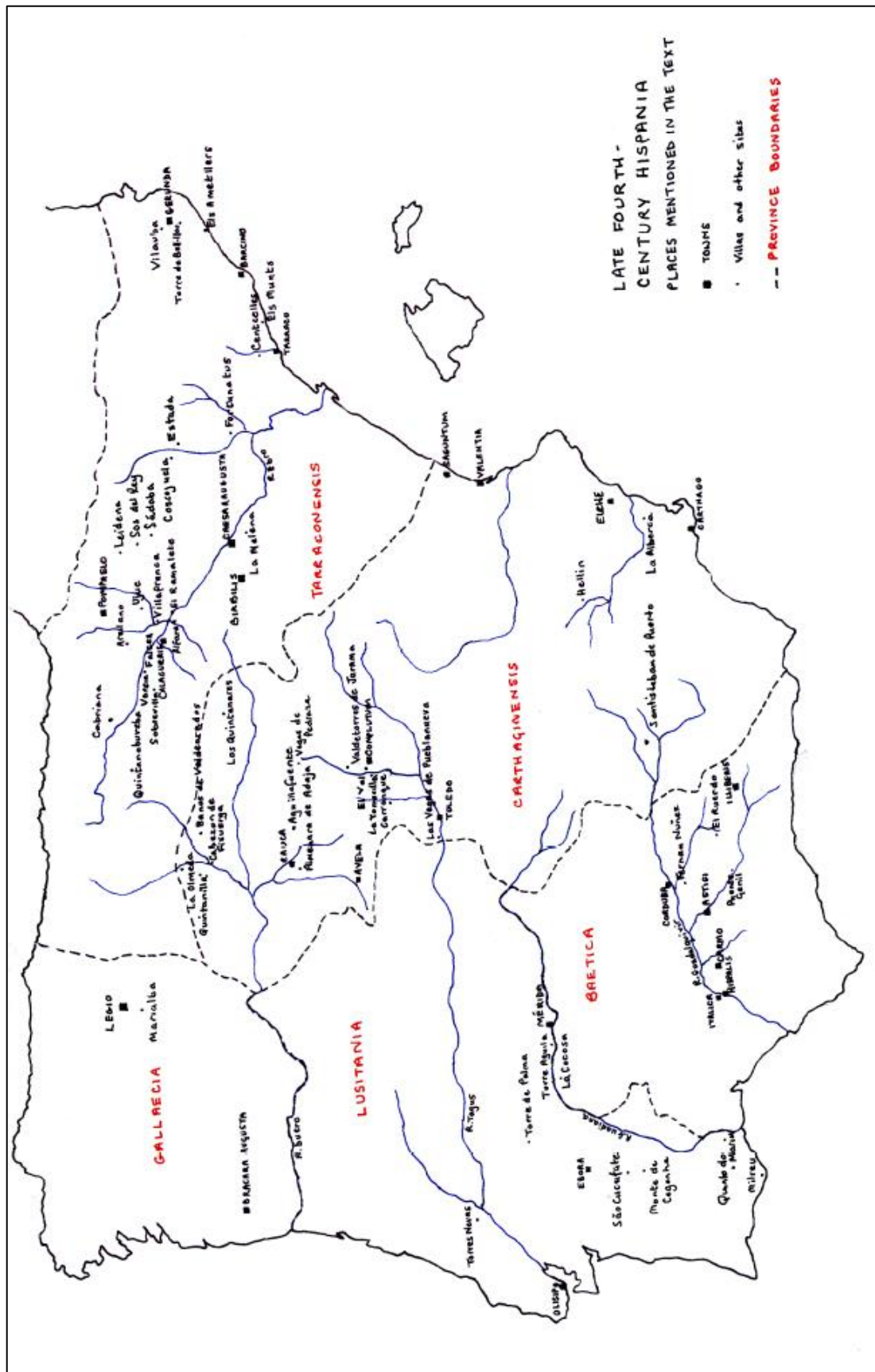
28. Mosaic: 'House of the Judgement of Paris', Zaragoza,
Third/Fourth Century.
Museo de Zaragoza,



29. Mosaic: Three Hebrews in the Fire,

Late Fourth Century.

Centcelles Villa, near Tarragona.



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